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ABSTRACT

Specific goals of this study of the national dropout problem are to: (1) define the problem; (2) identify demographic characteristics of dropouts; (3) describe economic and social consequences; (4) identify programs and practices that prevent students from dropping out; (5) identify federal and state initiatives; and (6) identify private sector responses to the dropout problem. Reports published by federal agencies and recent research studies are reviewed, as are grant applications under the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program and programs funded by the Federal Government, states, and private agencies. In the United States, 400,000 to 500,000 young people aged 16 to 24 years drop out of school each year, and an additional 80,000 to 120,000 youth aged 14 and 15 years also drop out annually. These rates have historically been higher for minorities than for non-minorities, but the gap is narrowing. Strategies advocated to address dropping out have been program reforms and schoolwide reforms. Characteristics of both approaches that have been successful are noted as they have worked in government or private sectors. Nine successful programs, school dropout prevention programs and recovery programs, are examined in depth. Research makes it clear that the dropout problem is multidimensional and requires a variety of approaches. Nine tables present details about dropout rates and characteristics. There is a 52-item list of references. (SLD)

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DROPOUT PREVENTION: STRATEGIES FOR THE 1990s

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DROPOUT PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR THE 1990s

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June 1991

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As public awareness of the dropout problem has grown, researchers and policy analysts have been working to identify effective strategies to prevent students from dropping out of school and to help dropouts complete their education. The initial response to the problem was to establish dropout prevention efforts in high schools, since most students drop out of school during their high-school years. Increasingly, however, dropout prevention programs are being targeted at middle school and elementary school students, as there is growing consensus that early intervention is critical to dropout prevention. Pelavin Associates undertook this study for the U.S. Department of Education to provide current information on the dropout problem. The specific goals of the study were --

- To define the magnitude of the dropout problem;
- To identify the demographic characteristics of dropouts;
- To describe the economic and social consequences of dropping out;
- To identify programs and practices that prevent students from dropping out of school;
- To identify Federal and state initiatives to deal with the dropout problem; and
- To identify private sector responses to the dropout problem.

This study updates and expands on an earlier study conducted by Pelavin Associates for the U.S. Department of Education (Sherman, 1987), which had three main parts:

- A review of research studies that have focused on the operation and effects of "successful" dropout prevention and reentry programs;
- A review of evaluations of different types of dropout prevention and reentry programs to identify effective program strategies; and
- Site visits to nine dropout prevention programs that have shown some success in dealing with the dropout problem.

For this study, the researchers undertook the following activities to provide information on the dropout problem and dropout prevention programs:

- A review of reports published by the Bureau of the Census, the National Center for Educational Statistics, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics that provide information on the dimensions of the dropout problem and the effects of dropping out on employment and family income;
- A review of recent studies of dropout prevention programs and the research on schoolwide reform as a strategy of dropout prevention;
- A review of grant applications under the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program, a Federal program enacted in 1988 to identify and validate effective dropout prevention strategies; and
- A review of programs funded by the Federal Government, states, foundations, and other institutions to prevent students from dropping out of school and to persuade dropouts to return to school.

The major findings of this research follow.

An Overview of the Dropout Problem

Estimates of the number of high school dropouts and the dropout rate vary significantly. However, data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census Current Population Survey (CPS) from 1970 through the late 1980s indicate that the dimensions of the dropout problem in the United States are as follows:

- Some 400,000 to 500,000 young people between the ages of 16 and 24 drop out of school each year. It is estimated that another 80,000 to 120,000 youth ages 14 and 15 years old also drop out of school each year, bringing the total number of dropouts each year to between 500,000 and 600,000 young people.

- More males than females drop out of high school. Between October 1989 and October 1990, about 215,000 males and 190,000 females between the ages of 16 and 24 dropped out of school.
- In the late 1970s, the dropout rate for females exceeded the dropout rate for males, but a rise in the dropout rate for males through the early 1980s and a steady decline in the dropout rate for females have resulted in lower dropout rates for females.
- Between 1974 and 1989, the total number of high school dropouts ages 14 to 24 per year declined by about 43 percent -- from 930,000 to 525,000.
- Dropout rates declined dramatically between the early 1970s to the late 1980s. Overall annual or event dropout rates declined from a peak of 5.9 percent in 1973-74 to a low of 3.9 percent in 1989-90. Cohort rates declined from about 20.4 percent in 1970-71 to about 15.9 percent in the early 1980s. The proportion of 16-to-24-year-olds who had not completed high school and who were not enrolled in school dropped from about 15 percent in 1970 to about 12.2 percent in 1986, but rose slightly to 12.6 percent in 1989.
- Although the overall number of dropouts has declined, the number of handicapped youth who drop out has increased steadily between 1984 and 1988.
- Dropout rates for minorities have generally been higher than dropout rates for whites, but there has been a narrowing of the gap in dropout rates between whites and blacks. The dropout rate for Hispanics is considerably higher than rates for either whites or blacks.
- Dropout rates are higher among the handicapped population than among the non-handicapped population.
- Dropout rates are especially high in many large urban areas and in some rural regions of the country. In some central city and rural school districts, dropout rates are between three and four times the national average.
- Dropout rates for handicapped students in small towns and rural areas are similar to the rates in large cities.

Completion of Diploma Requirements by High School Dropouts

Although a sizable proportion of American youth never finish high school, many students who drop out of school eventually return to graduate or obtain an alternative credential.

- About 46 percent of school dropouts return to school and complete the requirements to graduate from high school or obtain an alternative certificate. Juniors and seniors are more likely to return to school than students who dropped out in earlier years.
- Rates of return are higher for males than females and higher for whites and blacks than Hispanics.
- Many dropouts who eventually complete their high school education do not return to a regular school program. Many complete an alternative program or earn the General Equivalency Diploma.

The Economic Consequences of Dropping Out

Dropping out of high school seriously limits the labor market opportunities of both young adults and older members of the work force, who suffer lower employment rates, are concentrated in lower-skilled jobs, and earn less than high school graduates. Dropping out also has other serious consequences for the country.

Lower Employment Rates for High School Dropouts

- Graduation from high school is associated with higher rates of employment for all segments of the population.
- White dropouts consistently have higher employment rates than black dropouts, but completion of high school narrows the gap in employment rates between blacks and whites.
- White dropouts consistently have higher employment rates than Hispanic dropouts, but the gap in rates is very small. Completion of high school, therefore, does not produce an improvement in the employment status of Hispanics relative to whites.
- Employment rates for males are consistently higher than the rates for females, both for dropouts and for high school graduates. However, completion of high school reduces the gap in employment rates between males and females.

Lower-Skilled Jobs for High School Dropouts

- Although only a small percentage of dropouts and high school graduates are employed in higher-paid managerial and professional positions, a higher percentage of graduates than dropouts are in these positions.
- A far smaller percentage of high school dropouts are employed in higher-skilled technical and precision production positions than high school graduates.
- Dropouts are heavily concentrated in lower-skilled service occupations and as machine operators, fabricators, and laborers, and the concentration of dropouts in these positions increases with age.
- Although high school graduation is associated with a decline in the percentage of the population employed in service and operator positions in all age and racial and ethnic groups, the decline is greatest for Hispanics and smallest for blacks.
- High school graduation is associated with an increase in the percentage of the population employed in technical and precision production positions in all racial and ethnic groups, but the impact varies with the racial and ethnic group.

Lower Earnings for High School Dropouts

The Bureau of the Census estimates that over the course of a person's working life (ages 18 to 65), the typical high school graduate earns approximately $200,000 more than the typical dropout does. Recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that:

- Young adults ages 16 to 24 who graduated high school had median earnings in March 1988 about 20 percent higher than high school dropouts did. The gap in median income was even higher for older segments of the population.
- High school graduation improves the earnings of all racial and ethnic groups and reduces the earnings gap between minorities and whites.
- Although high school graduation improves the earnings of both males and females, it has a negligible effect on the earnings gap between males and females in all age groups.

Other Costs of Dropping Out

- Dropping out of high school entails many other costs for society. It was estimated in 1972 that high school dropouts cost the nation annually about $77 billion: $71 billion in lost tax revenue, $3 billion in welfare and unemployment costs, and $3 billion in crime prevention costs. Another estimate suggests a loss of about $68 billion in tax revenue to all levels of government from the high school class of 1981 alone.

Promising School Practices in Dropout Prevention

Although the evidence about program effectiveness is lacking, two strategies are advocated to address the dropout problem. These are program reforms and schoolwide reforms. Program reforms are special programs designed to meet the needs of specific students. The programs are structured according to specific problems, needs, and community resources. Schoolwide reforms are focused on the structural, systemic change of the schools.

According to the Education Commission of the States (Survey of State Initiatives for Youth At Risk, Isenhart and Bechard, 1988), those who view the causes of dropping out as the "child as deficient" advocate a "safety net" design to prevent dropouts. Once symptoms of the problem are observed and gaps are located, special programs are designed to combat the deficiency in the child. Program reform seeks to provide services to at-risk youth in a variety of settings including regular classes, schools within schools, and alternative schools, and uses a variety of collaborative arrangements between schools and other agencies.

People who view dropouts as a "system as deficient" problem advocate building a flexible, broad-based school structure with bridges to other services and resources, so that caring communities can provide security and success for all children. Schoolwide reform involves many of the principles identified in the literature as characteristics of "effective schools".

The size of the dropout population in a school may influence the choice of a strategy to deal with the problem. Schools that have a large number or high percentage of dropout-prone youth or dropouts may find that program reforms are not adequate to meet all the needs of all the students requiring special services. These institutions are more likely to need a schoolwide reform strategy as a comprehensive approach to dropout prevention.

The research literature on dropout programs and schoolwide reform, as well as site visits to a sample of dropout prevention and recovery programs, provide insights into ways programs are currently operating and strategies for future efforts at dropout prevention.

Characteristics of Program-Specific Dropout Interventions

Several characteristics emerge consistently from the literature and site visits as features of "effective" dropout prevention programs. Where these characteristics are a key component of a specific dropout program, an example has been provided.

- Early Intervention. Identifying at an early age children who are likely to become academic underachievers, failures, or truants, or students likely to manifest behavioral problems is essential to preventing them from dropping out. Programs can then be developed using a variety of strategies to meet their academic and behavioral needs. One program in our study, the **Model School Adjustment Program**, in Broward County, Florida, uses an early intervention approach to dropout prevention. It provides sixth graders who have a record of academic and behavioral problems in elementary school with peer tutoring and family counseling to help them work through their personal and family problems.

- Small class size, low pupil-teacher ratios, and a supportive school environment. The research suggests that students who have not met with success in regular schools operating in a large, bureaucratic environment may function better in smaller classes where teachers can relate to them more personally. Small class size works to overcome some of the students' disaffection with school by allowing teachers to use a more interactive style, to individualize their programs of instruction, and to experiment with different approaches to working with students. In such an environment, students develop the feeling that somebody cares about them and will help them to improve their academic skills and deal with personal problems. To achieve this goal, Theodore Roosevelt High School in New York City reorganized the ninth grade into smaller clusters where students receive additional support services from a coordinator/teacher, a guidance counselor and two family professionals. This reorganization was a component of the **Dropout Prevention Program** funded by the New York City Board of Education.

  Schools that create a supportive environment can help students overcome impediments to a sense of belonging and social bonding. Such students are less likely to reject school and more likely to conform to school policies and procedures. In addition, by feeling more comfortable with other students and teachers, these students can begin to allow themselves to take the educational risks that are essential for academic growth.

- Motivated, committed teachers and teacher autonomy. Motivated and committed teachers can actively help students overcome impediments to school membership and foster academic engagement. These teachers view their role beyond imparting subject matter; respond to student misbehavior not with retribution, but with understanding and guidance in appropriate behaviors; and hold high expectations of students.

  Teacher autonomy provides teachers with the latitude to experiment with different instructional approaches, learning materials, styles of interaction, and scheduling to determine which are most effective in meeting the academic and personal needs of individual students.

- Team management approach to planning, implementing, and evaluating dropout prevention strategies. Teachers, volunteers, paraprofessionals, aides, administrators, and the principal are responsible for a program's success and should all play a role in developing and implementing that program. Individuals need to "buy in" to a program and develop a sense of ownership if they are going to make that program work. Theodore Roosevelt High School, for example, implemented a team management approach to plan, implement, budget, and evaluate prevention strategies for their school.

- The principal is an entrepreneur, willing to experiment with new approaches. Principal leadership is key to motivating staff, mobilizing school resources, and creating the environment for a successful program. In recognizing the multiple needs of students, the principal as entrepreneur can experiment with new approaches to meet these needs. The principal, not threatened by the introduction of new programs or outside staff into the school, seeks funding for these additional resources and develops relationships with other community agencies that can provide services to students in a setting outside the school.

  Staff in several programs in our study including Theodore Roosevelt High School and Far Rockaway High School in New York City, and the **Model School Adjustment Program** were unanimous in their views that the dropout prevention programs could not have gotten off the ground without the commitment and dedication of the principal.

- Clear communication of program goals and student responsibilities. Administrators and teachers must clearly communicate the goals of the learning program to both students and parents. Everyone should know the program's objectives and his or her respective responsibilities in carrying out these objectives. Staff in all the programs in our study indicated this was an essential element to their program's success. Parents can provide follow-through if it appears that the student is not working to meet the program's goals.

- Reinforcement of student progress by the school. Many students who drop out of school have developed a poor self-image because of their failure to make adequate progress in their school work. Providing regular reinforcement of students' academic progress and rewards for significant improvements in their work or behavior may keep a student from dropping out.

  Projects where reinforcement is a key program component include **Project COFFEE**, in North Oxford, Massachusetts, and in the **Model School Adjustment Program**.

- Learning programs focused on basic skills. Most dropout-prone youth are deficient in basic skills and, as a result, have been retained in grade at least once or twice over their school careers. Focusing academic coursework on basic skills in core subject areas redresses this problem. Students motivate themselves better and remain in school when they can master basic skills and pass competency tests.

  Where appropriate, balancing routine skill learning with accelerated learning strategies can improve academic performance. Instruction in basic skills is also an important adjunct to job training efforts aimed at dropout prevention or recovery. The literature in this area finds that job training alone is not sufficient to help dropout-prone youth and school dropouts complete school. However, job training, in combination with basic skills, enhances students' chances of finishing school and obtaining jobs requiring higher-level skills.

  The **Peninsula Academies** in California best illustrate the strategy of integrating instruction in basic skills with technical training oriented towards careers in the computer and electronics fields. Students receive instruction in core academic courses that are tailored to providing them with the skills they need to get and keep a job in these fields. This instruction is supplemented with vocational training and internships with local high-tech firms that are potential employers of program graduates.

- Individual or group counseling and mentor programs. Many students who drop out of school need a person who really "cares" about them and will spend time helping them with their problems. This person can be a teacher, a counselor, a case manager, or mentor who can take interest in the child. Mentors, for example, were an important component of the **Peninsula Academies** and of **"Las Madrinas"** in New York City. Effective counseling can be achieved using a variety of techniques, among them, small pupil-guidance counselor ratios and peer counseling. Peer and family counseling were among the services provided by the **Model School Adjustment Program**.

- Recognition by teachers and administrators that individual students have multiple needs and that different students need different combinations of services. In addition to the lack of academic progress, many dropout-prone youth face social and personal problems. Multiple interventions are required to meet these diverse needs and to help students stay in school and complete their education. A case management approach such as the one in the **Dropout Prevention Program** in Far Rockaway High School is often used to match students with required services.

- School-to-school linkages. Students often fall through the cracks in the transitions from elementary to middle school or junior high school and then again at the next transition to high school. Various techniques, including the use of managers, have been developed to bridge the gap between these transitions. Also, visits by a program administrator in a middle school to a feeder elementary school to acquaint the students with the program and the middle school, as well as orientation visits by students at the lower school to the upper school to familiarize them with the building and the staff, have proven helpful.

  Administrators at both the **Model School Adjustment Program** and Theodore Roosevelt High School facilitate the transition between schools by visiting the feeder schools to provide information about the receiving school and its programs.

- Parental involvement in the student's educational program. Numerous studies show that parents' encouragement of students to learn, assistance in school work, and participation in school activities support their children's achievement. A variety of approaches are used by dropout programs to involve parents in their children's education. Some programs, such as the **Model School Adjustment Program** and the **Valued Youth Partnership**, require parents to participate in family counseling sessions if their child is to receive other program services. Others monitor student absences from school on a daily basis, and make home visits to at-risk students with attendance problems.

- School-business collaboration. Cooperation between schools and businesses to promote career awareness and provide job training are viewed as having a positive effect on students' attitudes and work habits. By making it clear that success in school can lead to a real job after graduation, business involvement can improve students' motivation to work harder for their diplomas.

The **Peninsula Academies** provide examples of school-business collaboration. They provide an integrated program of academic coursework and vocational training in computers and electronics that prepares students for careers and high-tech firms in the San Francisco Bay area. Similarly, **Project COFFEE** uses a collaborative arrangement with the Digital Equipment Corporation and other local companies to provide students with training and hands-on work experience in a number of career areas, including word processing, computer maintenance and repair, horticulture and agriculture, and building maintenance and repair.

Schoolwide Reform

Because there is concern that program reform does not get to the root of the dropout problem, schoolwide reform has been advocated as a comprehensive approach to dropout prevention. Schoolwide reform involves fundamental changes in traditional school organization, governance, policies, programs, practices, and behavior to improve student learning and development, the school climate, and student productivity. There is no one model of schoolwide reform because each school has a different mix of students and staff, each serves a distinctive community, and each has a different history of efforts to improve educational services. However, the literature on schoolwide reform and current efforts at reform point toward some promising ways to deal with youths at risk of dropping out of school. Examples are provided where it is a prominent feature of the reform.

- Educators are given increased autonomy at the school building level. Principals and their staffs have substantial authority to set school performance goals, to structure the schedule and patterns for daily instruction, to initiate new programs and activities, and to evaluate achievement. Teachers are given increased responsibility for staff allocation, curriculum selection and development, and textbook selection. Both principals and teachers are held more accountable for results. Massachusetts public schools, through the **Carnegie Schools Program**, can use grant funds to develop management systems that provide increased autonomy for school-based professionals. The Lawrence, Massachusetts schools are also utilizing school-based management.

- School programs are structured and scheduled more flexibly. Alternative ways of organizing students and teachers replace the traditional seven periods per day in which students are organized by grade level and teachers are organized by departments. The traditional approach fragments the school day and leaves little opportunity for consistent interaction among students or between students and adults in the building. Alternative approaches include organizing classes through team teaching, as in the Jefferson County Public School system in Kentucky, or through school groupings frequently called "schools within a school" or "clusters", as in Seattle's middle schools, to provide greater coherence in program content and delivery.

- Innovative instructional strategies designed to accommodate the strengths and weaknesses of a diverse student population are introduced. Traditional approaches to curriculum and instruction are redesigned to accommodate the strengths and weaknesses of a diverse student population. New approaches to learning such as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and "teacher as coach" are used to help all students acquire higher order skills.

- The overall atmosphere in schools is personalized and nurturing. All students are made to feel that they are an integral part of the school. A sense of caring and belonging extends to all children and adults, as well as the larger school community. In Seattle's middle schools, for example, homerooms are being replaced with a teacher advisory period which will include counseling and group discussions. There is a belief that all students are important and that all must receive a quality education.

- All parts of the community are encouraged to be actively involved in school activities. The school uses a variety of techniques to involve parents in school activities so that students understand that their parents place a high value on education. Participation in parent advisory councils, working as classroom volunteers, and attendance at school functions are ways schools obtain parent involvement. In Massachusetts, for example, school-based planning teams must include parent representatives and a community representative. Schools also seek partnerships with area businesses and local colleges and universities and works with community agencies to benefit the students and their families.

- Schools with at-risk populations use a case management system. Schools recognize that with a diverse population individual students have different needs and require different combinations of services. A case manager/coordinator assesses students' needs, plans strategies for students at risk of dropping out, and arranges and coordinates the delivery of services from multiple agencies for these students, in addition to working with parents, the school and community for the benefit of the student. Case management is a key element of the Annie Casey Foundation's **New Futures Initiative.**

- Teachers receive special training in new methods of teaching and ways of responding to the developmental needs of the students. The belief is that the more teachers are exposed to new knowledge through formal staff development activities, informal exchanges with colleagues, and visits to other schools, the more they can draw on in creating their own effective learning environments. Pre-service and in-service training promote teaching to the unique needs of students from diverse multicultural settings and working with increased responsibility in setting school performance goals. Staff development programs, similar to the one developed by the Jefferson County School system in Kentucky, include training in such areas as management, team building, effective leadership, bilingual education, cooperative learning, and development of critical thinking skills.

Public and Private Responses to the Dropout Problem

As concern over the magnitude of the dropout problem has spread, Federal and state policymakers, private groups, communities, foundations, and others have initiated programs to meet the needs of at-risk or disadvantaged youths.

Federal Responses

The Federal Government has responded to the dropout problem in a variety of ways. The Department of Education has sought to obtain comprehensive information on the size and nature of the dropout population, including the development of a common definition of a dropout. For example, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has funded two national studies: the National Longitudinal Transition Study, which provided information on the rate at which students drop out by handicapping condition and other personal characteristics; and the High School Transcript Study, which provided information on dropout rates for a subset of handicapped and non-handicapped students by population density. In addition, OSEP annually collects data from the states on secondary-age school exiters among special populations.

The National Center for Education Statistics is providing support to the Council of Chief State School Officers to develop a dropout reporting model for districts and states. The Education Data Improvement Project has focused its efforts on improving the comparability, comprehensiveness, and timeliness of data reported annually by states and public schools.

The Department of Education has also funded several demonstration projects including the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance

Program and the Carl D. Perkins Cooperative Demonstration Program. The former, directed by the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, funds projects that target economically and educationally disadvantaged students who are at risk or who have dropped out of school. The goals of the latter program, directed by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, are to improve the quality of vocational education, to help students develop the skills necessary for productive employment immediately following school, and to alleviate current shortages of skilled workers in certain fields.

Federal agencies have also developed programs or set-aside funds within existing programs to address the needs of at-risk youth. For example, under the Department of Labor's Job Training Partnership Act, Title IIA, Training Services for Disadvantaged Youth, 40 percent of the funds allocated to local areas must be spent on disadvantaged youths between the ages of 16 and 21. Basic skills remediation and literacy training are important parts of the training services under Title IIA.

Several agencies are cooperating to provide services for dropout-prone youths or dropouts. The Youth 2000 campaign of the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services aims to decrease the number of high school dropouts, to increase the reading and general literacy levels of youths, and to reduce teen pregnancy and substance abuse. Programs work with in-school youths, recent school dropouts, and out-of-school youths.

State Responses

Some states, such as New York, California, Florida, and North Carolina, have funded dropout prevention and recovery initiatives at relatively high levels, while others have established policies to encourage local school districts to develop initiatives.

Three basic programs and funding strategies operate at the state level to meet the needs of dropout-prone youth and school dropouts:

- Demonstration or model program grants are used by states to fund dropout prevention activities where resources are relatively scarce and where the state is either unwilling or unable to provide extensive program funding.

- Research and dissemination grants are used by states with limited resources to identify model programs and to disseminate information about them statewide.

- Planning and implementation grants are used by states with greater resources to fund dropout prevention activities.

States use a variety of mechanisms to fund dropout prevention programs:

- Categorical grants are of two kinds: competitive (all school districts may submit proposals but preference is given to school districts with particular characteristics) and targeted grants, (only school districts with a high incidence of dropout-prone youths can submit a proposal).

- A general aid formula is used to provide aid in states where a relatively large number of school districts have high dropout rates. Funds are usually generated through a combination of state and local revenue.

- A cost-reimbursement strategy reimburses programs for costs previously incurred rather than providing funding for anticipated or standard costs.

States use dropout prevention funds to provide a broad range of services for dropout-prone youths and school dropouts. The emphasis among the following programs varies with the state:

- Academic improvement programs encompass a variety of interventions including alternative schools or classes, alternative curricula and instructional techniques, and extracurricular activities.

- Attendance improvement programs emphasize improving contact with parents, providing rewards for attendance, and improving recordkeeping.

- Personal adjustment programs emphasize individual or group counseling, family counseling, mentors, case management, and cooperation with social service agencies to provide services to students.

- Career preparation and job training programs offer career counseling and seminars on employability, internships with community service agencies or private employers, modified scheduling to permit after-school employment, and, in some cases, guaranteed employment upon completion of the program or high school graduation or its equivalent.

- There is an increased emphasis on improving collection of data on school dropouts and developing a uniform methodology for reporting actual dropout information.

- Early intervention programs work with children who have been identified early as being at risk. In some states, interventions are instituted at the preschool level.

- States are beginning to experiment with schoolwide reform to meet the needs of all students.

Foundation and Other Responses

As is true of state programs, foundation and other initiatives to meet the needs of dropout-prone youths include both program reform and schoolwide reform. A review of the various initiatives supported by several foundations leads to the following general observations:

- Urban school districts are being reformed to provide a more coherent educational and human service delivery system to all youth.
- Cooperative arrangements between the city school systems and community-based businesses, and public and private institutions and agencies have become an important conduit for providing services to potential school dropouts.
- Interventions are being targeted to adolescents in middle grades, where developmental changes tend to compound the problems of potential school dropouts.
- Gaining the active cooperation of parents in dropout prevention is regarded as a key element to the success of any program.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The problem of school dropouts has become a critical concern of policymakers at the Federal, state, and local levels in recent years. It is estimated that about 307,000 males and 245,000 females between the ages of 16 and 24 dropped out of school between October 1987 and October 1988. In addition, there were approximately 2.18 million males and 2.07 million females between the ages of 16 and 24 who were not enrolled in high school and who had not completed a high school diploma in October 1987.

As public awareness of the dropout problem has grown, researchers and policy analysts have been working to identify effective strategies to prevent youth from dropping out of school and to help dropouts complete their education. The initial response to the problem was to establish dropout prevention efforts in high schools, since most students drop out of school during their high-school years. Increasingly, however, dropout prevention programs are being targeted at middle school and elementary school students, as there is growing consensus that early intervention is critical to dropout prevention. A number of studies recently have begun to examine different strategies for serving dropout-prone youth and school dropouts, but this limited body of research has produced different assessments of "what works" in dropout prevention.

Some researchers suggest that relatively little is still known in dropout prevention and recovery (General Accounting Office, 1986; Intercultural Development Research Association, 1986). Others suggest that there are promising practices that schools might use in working with dropout-prone youth (Orr, 1987). Still others suggest that enough is known about what works in dropout prevention to develop strategies for effectively dealing with the dropout problem (Hahn and Danzberger, 1987).

Although conclusive evidence about program effectiveness is lacking, the schools are attempting to deal with the dropout problem with two strategies: program reform and schoolwide reform. Program reform involves designing special programs to meet the needs of specific students. These programs are structured according to specific problems, needs, and community resources. Schoolwide reform involves a systemic change in the way services are provided to all students.

According to the Education Commission of the States (Isenhart, 1988), educators who view the causes of dropping out as "child as deficient" advocate a "safety net" design to prevent dropouts. Once symptoms of the problem are observed and gaps are located, special programs are designed to combat the deficiency in the child.

Educators who view dropping out as a "system as deficient" problem advocate building a flexible, broad-based structure with bridges to other services, resources, and concerned individuals so that caring communities can try to provide security and success for all children.

The size of the dropout population in a school influences the choice of a strategy to deal with the problem. Schools that have a large number or high percentage of dropouts may find that program reforms are inadequate to meet the needs of all students requiring special services. These institutions are more likely to select schoolwide reforms as a comprehensive approach to dropout prevention.

Purpose of the Study

This study was undertaken for the U.S. Department of Education to provide current information on the following issues:

- The scope of the dropout problem;
- The demographic characteristics of dropouts;
- The economic and social consequences of dropping out;
- Effective programs and practices in dropout prevention; and
- National initiatives to address the dropout problem.

Research Activities

The study updates and expands on an earlier study conducted by Pelavin Associates for the U.S. Department of Education (Sherman, 1987) which had three main parts:

- A review of research studies that have focused on the operations and effects of "successful" dropout prevention and reentry programs;
- A review of evaluations of different types of dropout prevention and reentry programs to identify effective program strategies; and
- Site visits to nine dropout prevention programs that have shown some success in dealing with the dropout problem.

The programs selected for site visits were identified through the review of program evaluations that provided some empirical evidence of program success. Approximately 500 dropout prevention programs were identified as potential sites for inclusion in the study. School districts operating these programs were requested to provide descriptions and evaluations of their programs. Of the 200 responses received, the vast majority lacked an evaluation component. Approximately 20 programs provided evaluations of varying quality, and indicated some empirical evidence of program success. From these 20 programs, nine were selected for more in-depth review.

The programs were selected to represent the range of interventions that could be used to assist dropout-prone youth remain in school and to assist high school dropouts to return to school and complete a high school education or obtain an equivalency certificate. The programs included in that study were:

Middle School Dropout Prevention Programs

- **Model School Adjustment Program** - a prevention program for sixth-graders in the Driftwood Middle School, Broward County, Florida that includes peer tutoring, individual group counseling, and peer counseling;
- **Valued Youth Partnership** - a school-based youth tutoring program involving high-risk junior and senior high school students in San Antonio, Texas;

High School Dropout Prevention Programs

- **Dropout Prevention Program** - a program funded by the New York City Board of Education in 10 high schools and 29 middle and junior high schools that involves both school reorganization and a case management approach to student services;
- **Middle College High School** - an alternative high school in Queens, New York in which students take courses at a community college and receive intense personal counseling;
- **Peninsula Academies** - a program that integrates academic courses and technical training in computers and electronics in high schools in Menlo Park, California;
- **Project COFFEE** - a regional occupational training and instructional program in North Oxford, Massachusetts;
- **Satellite Academies** - an alternative high school with four campuses in three boroughs in New York City;

Recovery Programs for Dropouts

- **Educational Clinics** - a state-funded program in Washington State that involves diagnosis of students' educational needs and a short-term instructional program aimed at returning students to regular classroom programs or obtaining a General Educational Development certificate; and

- **Second Chance Pilot Program** - a state-funded program operated by school districts in Colorado to prepare students for a regular high school diploma or an alternative certificate.

For this study, the researchers undertook the following activities to provide current information on the dropout problem and dropout prevention programs:

- A review of reports published by the Bureau of the Census, the National Center for Educational Statistics, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics that provide information on the dimensions of the dropout problem and the effects of dropping out on employment and family income;

- A review of recent studies of dropout prevention programs and the research on schoolwide reforms as a strategy of dropout prevention;

- A review of grant applications under the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program, a Federal program enacted in 1988 to identify and validate effective dropout prevention strategies; and

- A review of programs funded by the Federal Government, states, foundations, and other institutions to prevent students from dropping out of school and to persuade dropouts to return to school.

Organization of the Report

The findings of both the original study and this study are presented in this report.[1] The report is organized in the following sections.

Chapter II

This chapter presents the results of recent U.S. Bureau of the Census surveys on the dropout problem as well as data from the National Center for Education Statistics. It contains the most current data on the number of school dropouts and dropout rates. The chapter reviews trends in dropout rates among the handicapped and non-handicapped population and identifies differences between male and female youth and youth from different racial and ethnic groups.

Chapter III

This chapter describes the consequences of dropping out of high school both for the individual and for society. The first section reviews the economic consequences in terms of employment and earnings. It also identifies differences between male and female youth and youth from different racial and ethnic groups. The second section discusses the social costs of dropping out.

Chapter IV

This chapter provides an overview of the types of interventions that schools and other service providers are using to meet the needs of dropout-prone youth and dropouts. It discusses four major goals of dropout prevention -- academic improvement, attendance improvement, personal and social adjustment, and career preparation. Illustrations are drawn from the literature review, the projects funded under the **School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program**, and the site visits to describe the strategies programs use to attain these goals.

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[1] The results of the initial study were published late in 1987 as a series of volumes entitled Dropping Out of School. It included the following reports: Volume I: Causes and Consequences for Male and Female Youth; Volume II: Promising Strategies and Practices in Dropout Prevention; Volume III: Program Profiles; and Appendix: State Programs in Dropout Prevention. The reader can refer to the above volumes for more detailed information about the programs included in the site visits.

Chapter V

This chapter discusses the characteristics that have emerged in the dropout prevention literature as features of effective program reforms. These characteristics were divided into four areas -- program organization, program staff, program services, and other program features. Elements of effective programs identified in the site visits are discussed in conjunction with the literature findings. In addition, observations made during the site visits that have direct implications for the development of dropout prevention and recovery efforts in other places are also included.

Chapter VI

This chapter discusses schoolwide reforms as an approach to dropout prevention. Common themes that have emerged from the literature on schoolwide reforms are provided. Examples of pilot programs are presented in the chapter.

Chapter VII

This chapter discusses the initiatives taken by the Federal Government and the states to address the dropout issue. Specific examples of current Federal and state policies and programs in dropout prevention and recovery are provided in the discussion.

Chapter VIII

This chapter focuses on the responses of foundations and other organizations to the dropout problem. Examples of funded programs range from research activities to program reforms to the more comprehensive schoolwide reforms.

Chapter IX

The summary and conclusions of this report are presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER II

OVERVIEW OF DROPOUT RATES

School dropouts are a major national concern. Yet there is relatively little agreement about the magnitude of the dropout problem. At the national level, different surveys use different definitions of a dropout and consequently produce different estimates of the dropout rate. At the state and district levels, the lack of agreement about the definition of a dropout and differences in methods used to collect data on dropouts produce statistics that make it difficult to compare dropout rates across states and districts.

To address this problem, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has developed a dropout reporting model for districts and states. The Education Data Improvement Project (EDIP), currently underway in 31 states, represents a national effort to get states and school districts to agree on common definitions and procedures for use in collection of high school completion and non-completion rates. The EDIP has focused its efforts on improving the comparability, comprehensiveness, and timeliness of data reported annually by states about public schools.

Under the model developed by CCSSO, a dropout is generally defined as "a student who for any reason other than death leaves school before graduation without transferring to another school/institution." A set of guidelines and procedures was developed for collecting dropout statistics and computing dropout rates. The project focused on the frequency of data collection, the types of data that would be useful for policy making, and the ways of reporting dropout rates.

Despite the problems in state and local data collection that the CCSSO pilot project is addressing, there does exist some evidence about the magnitude of the dropout problem and the relative incidence of dropouts among different social groups.

Defining the Magnitude of the Dropout Problem

The concept of a dropout has been defined in several ways. One concept is that dropping out is a discrete action (an event) that occurs at a particular point in time. An individual who leaves school before graduating or receiving a diploma is considered a dropout. The incidence of school dropouts, defined as the number of dropouts or as a dropout rate, can be measured over a period of time such as a school year or a calendar year. This type of dropout rate has been described as an event rate.

A second concept of a dropout is that dropping out is a condition: an individual is a dropout if, at a particular time, he or she is not enrolled in school and has not yet completed a high school education. This concept measures the prevalence of school dropouts in a segment of the population. The segment of the population may be limited to youth in a given age range, e.g., 17- and 18-year-olds, or may include all youth and adults above a certain age. This type of rate has been described as a status rate.

Another concept of a dropout relates to the behavior of a given class or cohort of students. An entering class of ninth-graders in high school can be considered a cohort whose behavior is of interest. The proportion of students in an entering class who do not graduate with the class can be defined as a cohort-dropout rate.

The Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census provides the most consistent time series data on school dropouts. These data are used to describe the incidence of school dropouts, measured both as an event rate and a cohort rate, and the prevalence of school dropouts. Event and status rates are presented for youth age 16 to 24. Both rates were generated using data published annually in Series P-20, "School Enrollment, Social and Economic Characteristics of Students."

Event and Cohort Dropout Rates

The most recent estimate of school dropouts from the CPS was that 405,000 youth between the ages of 16 and 24 dropped out of school between October 1989 and October 1990. These included 215,000 males and 190,000 females. Whites comprised 75 percent of the dropouts; blacks 21 percent; and Hispanics 17 percent. While data are no longer published on the number of youth ages 14 and 15 who dropped out of school during this period, including 120,000 youths ages 14 and 15 who dropped out of school between October 1985 and October 1986 -- the most recent period for which these data were published -- would bring the total number of high school dropouts to about 525,000 young people. Using youths ages 14 to 19 enrolled in schools below the college level in October 1989 as the base for calculating a dropout rate, this number represents an event dropout rate of 3.9 percent[1] for the 1989-90 school year and a cohort rate of 15.9 percent for youths ages 14 to 19 who were in school in October 1986[2].

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[1] This method of calculation overestimates the dropout rate for two reasons: 1) it counts as dropouts individuals who leave school but who subsequently return to school and complete a high school degree or its equivalent; and 2) it includes post-high-school-age youth among the dropout population. We cannot estimate the effect of the first factor on the dropout rate but the effects of the second may be

Other studies have shown that dropout rates of handicapped students are twice those of non-handicapped students. Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study on a sample of 3,045 special education exiters indicate a national dropout rate of 36 percent for school years 1985-86 and 1986-87 (U.S. Department of Education, 1989), compared with the data from the High School and Beyond study for school year 1982 which reports a national dropout rate of 17.3 percent for the general school-aged population (Barro and Kolstad, 1987).

Furthermore, state reported data to the Office of Special Education Programs for the school year 1987-88 indicated that of the 238,579 special education students exiting the educational system, 65,395 dropped out. This was 27.5 percent of the total exiting population. In that same school year, states reported an additional 40,186 students, approximately 17 percent of all exiters, leaving school for "other" reasons. This "other" category may be composed primarily of school dropouts who did not report their exiting status to the school before departure. If this is the case, the dropout rate among handicapped students lies between 27 and 44 percent.

Decline in Dropout Rates in the 1980s for the Non-Handicapped Student Population

During the 1970s and 1980s there has been a consistent decline in the dropout rate. After peaking at 5.9 percent during the 1973-74 school year, the event dropout rate declined to a low of 3.9 percent in 1989-90 (see Table 1). Overall, dropout rates during the 1980s have been consistently lower than rates during the 1970s. Cohort dropout rates parallel the trends for single years (see Table 2). After peaking at 20.4 percent in 1971-72, the cohort rate has declined steadily since the 1970s. The cohort rate was 15.9 percent in 1985-86 -- well below the peak of 20.4 percent a decade earlier.

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significant. Excluding 20-to-24-year-olds who dropped out of school from the dropout population would reduce the dropout rate by some undetermined amount.

[2] In calculating a cohort rate, we assumed that the annual dropout rate in each high school grade was the same as the overall annual dropout rate. A high school dropout rate was calculated by reducing the enrollment of 14-to-19-year-olds in October 1986 by the proportion of dropouts in 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89, and 1989-90 and dividing the residual enrollment count by the original 1986 enrollment.

TABLE 1

EVENT DROPOUT RATES BY SEX AND RACE, SCHOOL YEARS ENDING 1970 TO 1990

School Year	All Groups	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Males	Females
1970	5.4%	4.8%	8.9%	--	5.4%	5.4%
1971	4.7	4.5	5.8	--	4.9	4.5
1972	5.4	4.9	7.8	--	5.3	5.4
1973	5.8	5.3	8.6	--	6.3	5.2
1974	5.9	5.3	8.9	--	6.2	5.5
1975	5.1	4.8	6.8	--	4.9	5.3
1976	5.1	5.0	6.3	10.9%	5.6	4.7
1977	5.5	5.3	7.1	6.9	5.7	5.3
1978	5.6	5.2	7.7	8.8	6.2	4.9
1979	5.6	5.3	7.2	8.5	5.4	5.8
1980	5.3	5.0	6.8	10.4	5.8	4.7
1981	5.3	4.8	7.9	9.2	5.2	5.3
1982	4.8	4.5	6.4	6.8	5.0	4.7
1983	4.4	4.0	6.0	7.3	4.7	4.1
1984	4.7	4.7	5.5	8.7	4.9	4.5
1985	4.8	4.4	6.7	11.3	4.9	4.8
1986	4.7	4.5	4.6	11.8	4.8	4.5
1987	4.3	3.9	6.1	5.3	4.5	4.1
1988	4.7	4.5	5.6	8.9	5.1	4.3
1989	4.1	3.6	6.1	6.2	4.2	3.9
1990	3.9	3.6	3.8	6.0	3.9	3.8

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Selected publications, 1971 to 1991; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Population Characteristics, School Enrollment, Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: Series P-20, 1971 to 1990.

TABLE 2

COHORT DROPOUT RATES BY SEX AND RACE, SCHOOL YEARS BEGINNING IN OCTOBER, 1969 TO 1986

School Year	All Groups	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Males	Females
1969	19.7%	18.1%	27.7%	--	20.2%	19.0%
1970	20.1	18.6	27.7	--	20.8	19.1
1971	20.4	18.8	28.4	--	20.8	19.7
1972	20.2	18.9	27.3	--	21.1	19.1
1973	19.9	18.9	26.1	--	20.6	19.2
1974	19.7	18.8	25.1	--	20.6	18.7
1975	20.1	19.2	25.4	30.8%	21.0	19.2
1976	20.3	19.2	25.8	30.4	21.2	19.2
1977	20.1	18.8	26.5	32.1	20.8	19.1
1978	19.4	18.2	25.4	30.6	19.7	17.9
1979	18.4	17.1	24.5	29.7	19.2	17.5
1980	17.9	16.8	23.4	28.4	18.4	17.3
1981	17.4	16.4	22.4	30.0	18.1	16.9
1982	17.3	16.6	21.0	34.1	17.9	16.7
1983	17.3	16.4	21.0	32.4	17.8	16.7
1984	17.3	16.2	21.1	32.5	17.9	16.6
1985	16.7	15.5	20.6	28.8	17.3	15.8
1986	15.9	14.7	20.8	24.0	16.6	15.2

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Selected publications, 1971 to 1989; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Population Characteristics, School Enrollment, Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: Series P-20, 1971 to 1989.

Increase in Dropout Rates for the Handicapped Student Population

In contrast with the overall population, which saw a decline in dropout rates in the 1970s and 1980s, dropout rates for handicapped youths have increased steadily between 1984 and 1988. State reported data to the Office of Special Education Programs show an increase in the event dropout rate from 21 percent in school year 1984-85 to 27.5 percent in school year 1987-88 (OSEP, 1987-89). This does not include the percent of students leaving school for "other" reasons as described above.

Higher Dropout Rates for Males than Females

Both event rates and cohort rates have consistently been higher for males than for females throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[3] For males, the event rate peaked at 6.3 percent in 1972-73 and dropped to a low of 3.9 percent in 1989-90; the cohort rate declined from a high of 21.2 percent in the mid-1970s to 16.6 percent in 1986-87. For females, the event rate peaked at 5.8 percent in 1978-79 and dropped to a low of 3.8 percent in 1989-90; the cohort rate reached a high of 19.7 percent in 1971-72 and dropped to a low of 15.2 percent in 1985-86. As with the overall population, dropout rates for both males and females have consistently been lower during the 1980s than during the previous decade.

The Gap in Dropout Rates Narrows Between Whites and Blacks

Dropout rates for minorities have generally been higher than dropout rates for whites, but there has been a narrowing of the gap in dropout rates between whites and blacks over the 1970s and 1980s.[4] For whites, the event rate dropped from a high of 5.3 percent in several years of the 1970s to a low of 3.6 percent in 1988-89 and 1989-90; the cohort rate dropped from 19.2 percent during the mid-1970s to 14.7 percent in 1985-86. For blacks, the event rate dropped from a peak of 8.9 percent in the early 1970s to a low of 4.6 percent in 1985- 86; the cohort rate dropped from 28.4 percent in 1971-

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[3] In the Current Population Survey, dropout numbers for males and females are provided for the 16-to-24-year-old population. In calculating dropout rates for males and females, it was assumed that the proportion of male and female dropouts who were 14 to 15 years old was the same as for the 16-to-24 age group.

[4] The same procedure used to calculate dropout rates for males and females was used to calculate dropout rates for different racial and ethnic groups.

72 to 20.6 percent in 1984-85. Dropout rates for Hispanics are considerably higher than rates for either whites or blacks, but the small sample sizes for the Hispanic population preclude an exact determination of differences in rates between Hispanics and other racial groups.

Status Dropout Rates

Data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census Current Population Survey on the prevalence of school dropouts, i.e., the number of young people who are enrolled in school and who have not yet completed high school, generally support the findings on the incidence of school dropouts presented above. The survey finds that in October 1989, there were about 4.04 million young adults ages 16 to 24 who were not high school graduates and who were not enrolled in school. These included 2.15 million males and 1.89 million females. Whites numbered over 3.25 million, blacks about 644,000, and Hispanics about 1.14 million.[5] The 4.04 million people represented 12.6 percent of all 16-to-24-year-olds.

Decline in the Status Dropout Rates

The CPS also finds that the prevalence of school dropouts has declined consistently over the last decade and a half. From 1970 to 1986, the status rate declined from about 15.0 percent to about 12.2 percent before rising again in 1988 to 12.9 percent (see Table 3). Moreover, until the last few years, the proportion of young adults who are not high school graduates and who are not enrolled in school declined every year -- from 14.6 percent in 1979 to 12.2 percent in 1986.

Lower Status Dropout Rates for Females than Males

In 1989, the status rate for females ages 16 to 24 was lower than the rate for males (11.7 percent, compared with 13.6 percent). However, female status rates have been lower than male rates for only a short time. Through the mid-1970s, status rates for females exceeded the rates for males; beginning in 1977, the pattern was reversed.

The basis for this change lies in differences in patterns of school non-completion for males and females. Since 1970, the proportion of female dropouts declined steadily -- from 15.6 percent in 1970 to 11.4 percent in 1986. The status rate for

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[5] The sum of the dropouts for racial and ethnic groups does not equal the total, since Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups.

TABLE 3

PERCENT OF 16-TO-24 YEAR OLDS WHO HAVE NOT GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL AND WHO ARE NOT ENROLLED IN SCHOOL, 1970 TO 1989

School Year	All Groups	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Males	Females
1970	15.0%	13.1%	27.7%	--	14.1%	15.6%
1971	14.7	13.4	23.7	--	14.2	15.2
1972	14.6	13.6	21.5	34.3%	14.1	15.1
1973	14.1	12.9	22.3	33.6	13.7	14.5
1974	14.3	13.2	21.3	33.0	14.2	14.3
1975	13.9	12.6	22.8	29.2	13.2	14.5
1976	14.1	13.3	20.4	31.3	14.1	14.2
1977	14.1	13.4	19.7	33.0	14.5	13.8
1978	14.2	13.4	20.2	33.4	14.6	13.8
1979	14.6	13.6	21.1	33.8	15.0	14.2
1980	14.1	13.3	19.4	35.2	15.1	13.1
1981	13.9	13.2	18.5	33.2	15.1	12.8
1982	13.9	13.1	18.4	31.7	14.5	13.3
1983	13.7	12.9	18.1	31.6	14.9	12.5
1984	13.1	12.7	14.1	29.8	14.0	12.3
1985	12.6	12.2	15.1	27.6	13.4	11.8
1986	12.2	12.0	14.1	30.1	13.1	11.4
1987	12.7	12.5	14.5	28.6	13.3	12.2
1988	12.9	12.7	14.9	35.8	13.5	12.2
1989	12.6	12.4	13.8	33.0	13.6	11.7

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Population Characteristics, School Enrollment, Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: Series P-20, 1971 to 1990.

males, in contrast, rose during the 1970s, peaking at 15.1 percent in 1980 and 1981 before declining to current levels. (Dropout rates for males and females rose slightly since 1986.)

Decline in the Gap in Status Dropout Rates Between Whites and Blacks

Status rates for minorities have historically been higher than status rates for whites. However, the gap in status rates between whites and blacks has declined markedly in recent years.

In 1970, the status rate for blacks was over twice the rate for whites -- 27.7 percent compared with 13.1 percent. During the 1970s and 1980s, the status rate for whites fluctuated between 12 and 14 percent, while the rate for blacks declined steadily -- from a high of 27.9 percent in 1970 to 14.1 percent in 1986.

Moreover, there has been a major decline in the status rate for blacks during the 1980s. Between 1979 and 1986, the rate declined by about one-third -- from 21.1 percent to 14.1 percent. Thus, the gap in the status rate between whites and blacks was reduced significantly.

Consistently High Status Dropout Rates for Hispanics

The status rate for Hispanics has remained well above the rate for whites and blacks. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Hispanic status rate for youths ages 16 to 24 has generally been above 30 percent -- and in some years has been estimated as high as 36 percent. In 1989, the Hispanic status rate was still nearly 2.7 times higher than the white rate and about 2.4 times the rate for blacks.

Cohort Dropout Rates from High School and Beyond

The CPS data discussed above provide one basis for estimating cohort dropout rates. A second data base that has been used to provide data about cohort rates is High School and Beyond (HS&B), a longitudinal survey begun in the spring of 1980 with cohorts of high school sophomores and seniors. Approximately 30,000 sophomores participated in the base-year survey, and subsamples of the cohort were re-surveyed in 1982 (first follow-up), 1984 (second follow-up), and 1986 (third follow-up). Missing from the cohort is anyone who dropped out of school prior to the spring of his or her sophomore year.[6] Using data from sophomores who participated in the third follow-up, NCES estimates that 17.3 percent of the 1980 sophomores were identified as high school dropouts (NCES, 1989). Males were more likely to dropout than females (cohort rates were 19.3 percent and 15.2 percent, respectively) and Hispanics, American Indians, and blacks were more likely to drop out than whites and Asians. Dropout rates for Hispanics (27.9 percent) were nearly twice the rate for whites (14.8 percent) and about 25 percent higher than the rates for blacks (22.2 percent). Dropout rates for Asians were the lowest of all race and ethnic groups -- 8.2 percent of the 1980 HS&B sophomore cohort.

The estimates of cohort rates from HS&B are quite similar to Pelavin Associates' estimates of cohort rates based on CPS data. Overall, HS&B rates of 17.3 percent were only slightly lower than the 18.4 percent estimate from the CPS. HS&B rates were about the same as CPS rates for males (19.3 percent and 19.2 percent, respectively) and slightly lower for females (15.2 percent and 17.5 percent, respectively), blacks (22.2 percent and 24.5 percent, respectively), Hispanics (27.9 percent and 29.7 percent, respectively), and whites (14.8 percent and 17.1 percent, respectively). It would thus appear that the method Pelavin Associates used to estimate cohort rates with CPS data produces cohort rates that are consistent with HS&B estimates. The lower HS&B estimates may be due to the fact that they are based on a sophomore cohort, whereas the CPS rates are based on a cohort of high school freshmen.

Dropout Rates in Selected Regions and Geographical Areas

Dropout rates vary by region and geographical jurisdiction. Current Population Survey data for the period 1986 to 1988 show that dropout rates are highest in the South and lowest in the Northeast (NCES, 1989). Dropout rates are highest in central cities and lowest in suburban areas. These findings are supported by data from High School and Beyond (see Table 4).

The concentration of dropouts in urban and rural areas is confirmed in several other studies besides the Current Population Survey and High School and Beyond. The National Education Association, for example, sampled dropout rates in

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[6] The use of a sophomore cohort to estimate cohort dropout rates would probably understate the dropout rate for Hispanics who, according to CPS data, tend to have completed less schooling than other dropouts.

TABLE 4

PERCENT OF PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORES WHO DROPPED OUT BEFORE GRADUATION BY GEOGRAPHIC REGION AND COMMUNITY TYPE 1980 to 1982

Region	Urban	Suburban	Rural	All Places
Northeast	19.8%	8.6%	11.4%	11.9%
South	17.3	5.8	17.2	16.6
North Central	19.6	10.3	10.7	12.3
West	14.6	16.9	17.0	16.5
United States	18.1	12.8	14.3	14.4

Source: U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, High School and Beyond.

selected urban districts and found them to be as high as 30 percent in Boston, 35 percent in New York, 40 percent in Baton Rouge, 42 percent in Washington, and 58 percent in East Los Angeles.

Similarly, Pelavin Associates found, using a procedure established by the New York City Board of Education to compute a four-year dropout rate for high schools, that dropout rates in 1986 were 33 percent in New York City, 46 percent in Boston, 50 percent in Washington, D.C., 42 percent in Baltimore, 45 percent in Philadelphia, 48 percent in St. Louis, and 38 percent in Milwaukee (Pelavin Associates, 1987).

Dropout rates have also been found to be relatively high in some rural areas of the country. Research Triangle Institute found that dropout rates in Appalachia were about 5.5 percent higher than the national average in 1985 in the 13 Appalachian states. Moreover, dropout rates in the central and southern parts of the region were respectively 25 and 59 percent higher than the national average. Another study by Pelavin Associates (1987) in selected states similarly found dropout rates in a number of southern states ranging from 50 to 75 percent in some rural school districts in Mississippi and Tennessee.

Completion of Diploma Requirements by High School Dropouts

Although a sizable proportion of American youths never finish high school, many students who drop out eventually return to the educational system to complete high school or obtain an alternative credential (Pallas, 1986). As of the third follow-up of the High School and Beyond data (Spring 1986), a large proportion of the dropouts in the 1980 sophomore class had completed their diploma requirements. About 46 percent -- eight percent out of the 17.3 percent of dropouts -- had met their diploma requirements. Another 12 percent of the dropouts were in the process of completing these requirements (NCES, 1989).

Characteristics of Returnees and Completers

Various characteristics are associated with dropouts most likely to return to school. Students who had completed more of their education before dropping out were more likely to return to school and complete their education. An analysis of the third follow-up data of High School and Beyond found that students dropping out in tenth grade were least likely and those dropping out in twelfth grade were most likely to have completed high school by 1986 (Kolstad and Kaufman, 1989). In addition, the earlier the dropout had left high school, the longer it took for that dropout to complete the high school requirements.

Rates of return and completion are higher for males than females. Overall, young men who dropped out of school subsequently completed high school at a rate that was slightly higher than the rate for young women (47.5 percent compared to 45.2 percent).

Rates of return and completion varied significantly between Hispanics and whites, but not between blacks and whites. Hispanics were least likely to complete their education, with only about one-third doing so. Black and white dropouts did not differ in their completion rates, with approximately 50 percent completing for both groups (NCES, 1989).

Differences in dropout return and completion rates were also related to metropolitan status. Dropouts living in suburban areas had a significantly higher rate of return and completion than those living in urban areas.

Approximately 53 percent of the suburban dropouts completed their requirements compared to 44.5 percent of the urban dropouts. Dropouts in rural areas had the lowest completion rate with only 39 percent completing their high school requirements (NCES, 1989).

Increasing Numbers of Dropouts Obtain General Equivalency Diplomas

In addition to differences in rates of return to school among different segments of the population, the evidence also suggests that a large proportion of dropouts who do complete their high school education do not return to a regular school program (Pallas, 1986). Rather, they tend to complete an alternative program such as a General Equivalency Diploma (GED).

In their analysis of the third follow-up of the High School and Beyond Data, Kolstad and Kaufman found that about one-third of the returnee-completers had earned a high school diploma and two-thirds had earned an equivalency certificate. The researchers found that dropouts who did not delay long in returning to school earned a high school diploma. For those dropouts who finished within one year of their expected graduation date, about 45 percent earned high school diplomas. The proportion fell to about 25 percent for those who delayed longer.

Relatively little is known about the economic and educational consequences of obtaining high school graduation credentials outside of regular day programs. Some research suggests that GED recipients do not do as well in college as those with high school diplomas (Tugend, 1986). Findings from High School and Beyond suggest that there are relatively few, if any, differences in employment and earnings patterns between the two credentials (Kopka, 1989). However, as this type of degree becomes more prevalent, it will be necessary to look more closely at both its short-term and long-term impact.

CHAPTER III

THE CONSEQUENCES OF DROPPING OUT

The concern for dropouts is predicated on the belief that dropping out of high school has negative consequences both for the individual and for society. By and large, the research on the consequences of dropping out tends to support this view.[1] Individual dropouts may have difficulty finding and maintaining steady employment, may be employed in low-skilled and low-paying positions and, over the course of their working lives, suffer losses in earnings. Society may suffer because unemployment and lost earnings lower government revenues and increase the demand for social services. This chapter reviews the major consequences of dropping out for the individual and for society at large.

Economic Consequences of Dropping Out

Lower Employment Rates for Dropouts than Graduates

Dropping out of high school severely limits the labor market opportunities of the individual. A review of employment data shows that high school dropouts will consistently have lower rates of employment throughout their worklife than high school graduates (see Table 5). In March 1988, the employment rate for adults ages 18 to 24 who had completed four years of high school was about 48 percent higher than the rate for dropouts (69.1 percent compared with 46.8 percent). Similar differences were found for older adults: the employment rate for adults ages 25 to 44 who had completed high school was about 27 percent higher than the rate for dropouts (77.4 percent compared with 60.8 percent) and about 30 percent higher for adults ages 45 to 64 (65.0 percent compared with 50.0 percent).

High School Completion Narrows the Gap in Employment Rates Between Blacks and Whites. High school graduation significantly improves the employment rate for blacks. In March 1988, the employment rate for black dropouts ages 18 to

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[1] Dropping out could be beneficial for some students who are not getting anything out of school or who may be more successful in the job market. Wehlage and Rutter (1986), for example, found in a recent study that dropouts showed equal or greater improvements in self-esteem and a sense of control than high school graduates. However, on balance, the negative consequences of dropping out appear to outweigh the positive.

TABLE 5

Employment Population Ratios
Adults Age 18 to 64, March 1988

	18-to-24-Year-Olds		25-to-44-Year-Olds		45-to-64-Year-Olds	
Population Group	Less Than 4 Years High School	High School Education	Less Than 4 Years High School	High School Education	Less Than 4 Years High School	High School Education
TOTAL POPULATION	46.8%	69.1%	60.8%	77.4%	50.0%	65.0%
Males	54.5	76.0	74.3	87.5	63.7	77.4
Females	37.7	62.9	46.6	68.7	37.5	56.0
TOTAL WHITE	53.1	72.4	63.8	78.5	51.1	65.2
White Males	61.1	79.2	77.2	89.2	65.9	78.6
White Females	43.1	66.1	48.7	69.3	37.1	55.6
TOTAL BLACK	22.8	52.8	49.6	71.2	46.7	63.7
Black Males	26.4	61.0	61.7	76.6	55.1	65.4
Black Females	19.7	46.3	39.8	66.8	39.5	62.6
TOTAL HISPANIC	51.4	68.2	60.7	73.3	49.2	69.4
Hispanic Males	64.8	75.7	78.9	85.2	70.9	77.9
Hispanic Females	34.9	61.3	41.4	62.3	32.0	62.6

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Table 1: "Labor Force Status of the Civilian Noninstitutional Population 16 Years Old and Over, by Age and Years of School Completed," March, 1988.

24 was only about 43 percent of the employment rate for whites; for high school graduates the black/white employment ratio increased to 73 percent (see Table 5).

Similar improvements were evident in the older segments of the population as well. Among 25-to-44-year-olds, the ratio of black/white employment rates increased from 78 percent for dropouts to 91 percent for high school graduates. And among 45-to-64-year-olds, where the gap was narrower, the ratio of black/white employment rates increased from 91 percent to 98 percent.

High School Completion Does Not Narrow the Gap In Employment Rates Between Hispanics and Whites. In March 1988, the employment rate for Hispanic dropouts ages 18 to 24 was 51.4 percent -- or about 97 percent of the rate of 53.1 percent for whites in this same age group. High school graduation increased the rate of employment for both groups -- to 68.2 percent for Hispanics and 72.4 percent for whites. However, the ratio of Hispanic/white employment rates declined to 94 percent.

Similar changes occurred for individuals ages 25 to 44: employment rates for white and Hispanic high school graduates were higher than rates for dropouts. But again, the gap in employment rates between whites and Hispanics was slightly higher for high school graduates than for dropouts.

High School Completion Narrows the Gap in Employment Rates Between Males and Females. Employment rates for males are consistently higher than rates for females, both for dropouts and for high school graduates. However, completion of high school reduces the gap in employment rates between males and females.

In March 1988, the employment rate of female dropouts ages 18 to 24 was only 69 percent of the employment rate of male dropouts; for graduates, the female employment rate was 83 percent of the male rate. Among 25-to-44-year-olds, the employment rate of female dropouts was only 63 percent of the male rate, but the rate for female graduates was 79 percent of the male rate. And, for adults ages 45 to 64, the female employment rate increased from 59 percent of the male rate for dropouts to 72 percent for high school graduates.

Lower Skilled Employment For High School Dropouts

In addition to higher rates of employment, high school graduates tend to be employed in higher-skilled, better-paying positions than high school dropouts, regardless of the age of the worker.

Managerial and Professional Positions. Although only a small percentage of dropouts and high school graduates are employed in higher-paying managerial and professional positions, a higher percentage of graduates are in these positions, compared with dropouts.

Among the 16-to-24-year-olds who were employed in year-round, full-time wage and salary positions in March 1988, only 3.5 percent of the high school dropouts were employed in managerial and professional positions compared to 8.2 percent of the high school graduates; for the 25-to-44-year-old population, only 4.4 percent of the high school dropouts compared to 11.9 percent of the high school graduates were employed in these positions; for the 45-to-64-year-olds, 6.4 percent of the dropouts, compared to 16.6 percent of the graduates were employed in managerial and professional positions. Almost 2.5 times the number of high school graduates, regardless of the age group, were employed in managerial and professional positions compared to high school dropouts (see Table 6).

Technical and Precision Production Positions. In March 1988, 34.9 percent of the dropouts ages 16 to 24 were employed in technical and precision production positions, compared to 51.9 percent of the graduates -- a rate for dropouts that was only 67 percent of the rate for high school graduates (see Table 7). For adults ages 25 to 44, only 33.2 percent of the high school dropouts were employed in these positions, compared with 52.7 percent of the high school graduates -- a rate that was only 63 percent of that of high school graduates. Among older workers ages 45 to 64, high school dropouts were employed at only 65 percent of the rate of high school graduates, 35.3 percent compared to 54.7 percent.

Service and Operators Positions. Dropouts are heavily concentrated in lower-paying service occupations and in such jobs as machine operators, fabricators, and laborers. In addition, the concentration of dropouts in these lower-paying positions increases with age.

In March 1988, 54.9 percent of the dropouts ages 16 to 24 were employed as operators, fabricators, and laborers, compared to 36.2 percent of the high school graduates -- a rate that was 1.5 times the rate of high school graduates (see Table 8). For adults ages 25 to 44, 58.1 percent of the dropouts were employed in these positions compared to 33.7 percent of the graduates, a rate that was 1.7 times the rate of high school graduates. For adults ages 45 to 64, 55.5 percent of the dropouts compared to only 27.9 percent of the high school graduates were employed in these lower paying positions, a rate for dropouts that was 2.2 times the rate of high school graduates.

Effects of High School Completion on Employment Opportunities for Different Racial and Ethnic Groups. Although completion of four years of high school is associated with a decline in

TABLE 6

Percent of Year-Round Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers in Managerial and Professional Positions, March 1988

	16-to-24-Year-Olds		25-to-44-Year-Olds		45-to-64-Year-Olds	
Population Group	Less Than 4 Years High School	High School Education	Less Than 4 Years High School	High School Education	Less Than 4 Years High School	High School Education
TOTAL POPULATION	3.5%	8.2%	4.4%	11.9%	6.4%	16.6%
Males	2.2	6.4	3.8	10.0	6.8	1.7
Females	6.5	10.5	5.6	14.5	5.7	16.7
TOTAL WHITE	3.3	8.9	4.6	12.8	7.0	17.6
White Males	2.4	7.1	3.9	10.8	7.6	17.5
White Females	6.1	11.1	6.3	15.6	5.8	17.8
TOTAL BLACK	6.4	3.2	2.3	6.6	3.5	8.1
Black Males	--[1]	1.5	2.3	4.6	3.3	6.6
Black Females	--1	6.0	2.2	8.8	3.9	9.3
TOTAL HISPANIC	0.3	5.3	1.7	8.8	3.9	9.8
Hispanic Males	0.4	5.7	1.8	6.9	4.8	11.7
Hispanic Females	--1	4.7	1.5	11.8	1.9	7.4

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[1] The Bureau of Labor Statistics does not calculate ratios when there are fewer than 75,000.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, unpublised data, Table 18, "Earnings of Year Round Full-Time Workers 16 Years Old and Over Who Were Wage and Salary Workers in Longest Job," March 1988.

TABLE 7

Percent of Year-Round Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers in Technical and Precision Positions, March 1988

Population Group	16-to-24-Year-Olds Less Than 4 Years High School	16-to-24-Year-Olds High School Education	25-to-44-Year-Olds Less Than 4 Years High School	25-to-44-Year-Olds High School Education	45-to-64-Year-Olds Less Than 4 Years High School	45-to-64-Year-Olds High School Education
TOTAL POPULATION	34.9%	51.8%	33.2%	52.7%	35.3%	54.7%
Males	33.4	43.0	35.1	54.5	38.9	50.5
Females	38.8	62.8	5.6	14.5	5.7	59.9
TOTAL WHITE	36.1	53.7	4.6	12.8	7.0	56.4
White Males	34.1	45.6	3.9	10.8	7.6	51.3
White Females	41.8	63.8	6.3	15.6	5.8	62.9
TOTAL BLACK	27.7	35.3	25.4	41.6	19.9	40.1
Black Males	--[1]	27.2	27.8	33.9	27.4	42.1
Black Females	--1	48.2	21.5	49.6	7.7	38.4
TOTAL HISPANIC	29.4	61.2	25.6	51.4	27.3	51.2
Hispanic Males	24.8	48.3	28.0	46.6	29.2	49.7
Hispanic Females	--1	79.7	18.6	58.9	23.2	53.3

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[1] The Bureau of Labor Statistics does not calculate ratios when there are fewer than 75,000 persons in the denominator.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, unpublised data, Table 18, "Earnings of Year Round Full-Time Workers 16 Years Old and Over Who Were Wage and Salary Workers in Longest Job," March 1988.

TABLE 8

Percent of Year-Round Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers in Service and Operators Positions, March 1988

Population Group	16-to-24-Year-Olds		25-to-44-Year-Olds		45-to-64-Year-Olds	
	Less Than 4 Years High School	High School Education	Less Than 4 Years High School	High School Education	Less Than 4 Years High School	High School Education
TOTAL POPULATION	54.9%	36.2%	58.1%	33.7%	55.5%	27.9%
Males	56.5	44.5	55.1	39.4	50.1	31.7
Females	51.5	25.6	64.5	26.0	66.5	23.2
TOTAL WHITE	53.6	33.5	55.6	31.0	51.4	25.2
White Males	55.5	41.5	53.2	36.6	47.0	30.0
White Females	47.9	23.7	61.3	23.0	60.9	19.1
TOTAL BLACK	66.0	57.0	70.0	50.5	74.2	51.4
Black Males	--[1]	64.9	27.8	59.1	65.2	50.1
Black Females	--1	44.6	76.2	41.5	88.8	52.5
TOTAL HISPANIC	58.5	30.4	63.3	41.2	56.0	37.9
Hispanic Males	59.2	40.8	58.3	46.6	56.0	39.3
Hispanic Females	--1	15.5	77.4	28.7	72.3	39.3

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[1] The Bureau of Labor Statistics does not calculate ratios when there are fewer than 75,000 persons in the denominator.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, unpublised data, Table 18, "Earnings of Year Round Full-Time Workers 16 Years Old and Over Who Were Wage and Salary Workers in Longest Job," March 1988.

the percentage of the population employed in service and operators positions in all age, racial, and ethnic groups, the decline is greatest for Hispanics and smallest for blacks. According to the March 1988 CPS, Hispanic high school graduates between the ages of 16 and 24, had a 28 percent decrease in the population employed in service and operators 2positions, from 58.5 percent to 30.4 percent. A similar pattern was seen among whites, with a 20 percent decline for high school graduates, from 53.6 percent to 33.5 percent.

In contrast, for blacks in this age group, completion of high school was associated with only a nine percent decline in the population employed in these positions. The decline in the percent of the population employed in service and operators positions associated with high school graduation increased with age for all racial and ethnic groups except Hispanics.

Completion of four years of high school also has a differential impact in the percent of the population employed in technical and precision production positions in all racial and ethnic groups. Hispanics ages 16 to 24 appear to benefit the most from high school graduation, increasing the percentage of the population employed in technical and precision production positions by slightly more than 30 percent, from 29.4 percent to 61.3 percent. That increase declined gradually with age.

In contrast, blacks age 16 to 24 with four years of high school completed had only an eight percent increase in employment in these fields, from 27.7 percent compared to 35.3 percent. The increase continued to rise with age. Whites age 16 to 24 had a moderate increase of 18 percent with completion of four years of high school, from 36.1 percent to 53.7 percent. This increase remained constant throughout the worklife.

Lower Earnings For High School Dropouts

Lifetime Earnings for High School Dropouts. The Census Bureau estimates that over the course of a person's working life (ages 18 to 65), the typical high school graduate earns approximately $200,000 more than the typical dropout does (Bureau of the Census, 1983). For males, the differential in work life earnings between graduates and dropouts is estimated at $260,000, based on working life earnings of $861,000 for graduates and $601,000 for dropouts. For females, the differential is smaller -- $170,000 -- based on work life earnings of $381,000 for graduates and $211,000 for dropouts.

Median Earnings for High School Dropouts. Recent data published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics on the median earnings of dropouts and graduates who were employed as year-round, full-time wage and salary workers in March 1988 show that dropouts, on average, earn less money than high school graduates. In March 1988, young adults ages 16 to 24, who had completed high school had median earnings about 20 percent higher than high school dropouts did -- $12,500 for graduates compared with $10,374 for dropouts (see Table 9).

The gap in median income was even higher for older segments of the population. Among 25-to-44-year-olds, graduates had median earnings that were 34 percent higher than earnings of dropouts -- $19,599 for graduates, compared with $14,655 for dropouts. And, among 45-to-64-year-olds, the gap in earnings was 27 percent -- with graduates having median earnings of $21,972 and dropouts having earnings of $17,329.

High School Completion Does Not Narrow the Earnings Gap Between Minorities and Whites for All Age Groups. In March 1988, black dropouts in the 16-to-24-year-old age group had median earnings that were 81 percent of the earnings of white dropouts; black high school graduates, in contrast, had median earnings that were 89 percent of the earnings of white graduates.

The earnings gap between Hispanics and whites was smaller than that between blacks and whites. But as with blacks, among the 16-to-24-year olds, the earnings gap decreased with completion of four years of high school. Hispanic dropouts earned 86 percent of the earnings of white dropouts, while Hispanic graduates earned 92 percent of white graduates' earnings.

Among the 25-to-44-year-olds, completion of four years of high school decreased the earnings gap between Hispanics and whites, but increased the gap between blacks and whites. For Hispanics the difference in median earnings went from 81 percent of whites' earnings for dropouts to 88 percent for high school graduates. For blacks, however, the difference in earnings increased, dropping from 85 percent of whites' earnings for dropouts to 78 percent for high school graduates.

Among older workers ages 45 to 64, completion of a high school education closed the earnings gap between minorities and whites. Black dropouts earned 71 percent of the earnings of white dropouts, while black graduates earned 82 percent of the earnings of white graduates. For Hispanics there was even a more dramatic decline in the earnings gap. Hispanic dropouts earned 75 percent of the earnings of white dropouts, while Hispanic graduates had earnings that were 89 percent of the earnings of white graduates.

High School Completion Has a Negligible Effect on Closing the Earnings Gap Between Males and Females in All Age Groups. In March 1988, female dropouts ages 16 to 24 had median earnings that were 83 percent of the earnings of males; for graduates

TABLE 9

Median 1988 Earnings of Year-Round Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers
Ages 16 to 24

	16-to-24-Year-Olds		25-to-44-Year-Olds		45-to-64-Year-Olds	
Population Group	Less Than 4 Years High School	High School Education	Less Than 4 Years High School	High School Education	Less Than 4 Years High School	High School Education
TOTAL POPULATION	$10,374	$12,500	$14,655	$19,599	$17,329	$21,972
Males	10,834	13,581	16,904	23,212	21,311	29,059
Females	8,982	11,547	11,252	15,510	12,141	16,832
TOTAL WHITE	10,511	12,648	15,062	20,261	18,782	22,546
White Males	10,932	13,994	17,132	24,193	22,224	30,078
White Females	9,060	11,543	11,292	15,678	12,577	16,915
TOTAL BLACK	8,530	11,225	12,848	15,843	13,404	18,537
Black Males	7,578	10,975	14,724	17,578	16,179	21,110
Black Females	9,240	11,688	10,911	14,779	11,059	16,767
TOTAL HISPANIC	9,025	11,589	12,118	17,791	14,015	20,168
Hispanic Males	9,654	11,736	13,190	20,096	16,139	23,831
Hispanic Females	8,038	11,380	10,034	15,226	10,266	16,911

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Table 18, "Earnings of Year Round Full-Time Workers 16 Years Old and Over Who Were Wage and Salary Workers on Longest Job, By Occupation of Longest Job and Years of School Completed," March, 1988.

the ratio increased to only 85 percent of males' earnings. Among 25-to-44-year-olds, the ratio of female to male median earnings was about 67 percent for both dropouts and graduates. For older adults ages 45 to 64, the female/male ratios of median earnings were 57 and 58 percent respectively.

Caveats in Assessing the Relationship Between High School Completion and Earnings

In assessing the relationship between high school completion and earnings, a number of points need to be kept in mind. First, as Pallas (1986) observes, income comparisons between dropouts and high school graduates may underestimate the cost of dropping out. High school graduates who attend college earn even more than high school graduates who obtain no further schooling, both annually and over their working careers. Comparisons between dropouts and high school graduates who do not pursue college do not reflect the sizable economic returns that many high school graduates derive by continuing their education through college.

Second, the differential in earnings between dropouts and high school graduates may be due to other characteristics that differentiate graduates from dropouts, and which make graduates more valued by employers, e.g., ability, persistence, and dependability (Pallas, 1986). In fact, McDill, et al. (1986) estimate that only about one-half of the difference in earnings between dropouts and graduates is due to dropping out; the other half is due to differences in ability and other factors.

Societal Costs Of Dropping Out

Although the most direct consequences of dropping out of high school are borne by the individual, research indicates that there are other social and political costs attached to dropping out (Rumberger, 1986; Cipollone, 1986). Levin (1972), in an early study of the costs of dropping out, identified seven consequences of an inadequate education. These included:

- Foregone national income;
- Foregone tax revenues for the support of government services;
- Increased demand for social services;
- Increased crime;
- Reduced political participation;

- Reduced intergenerational mobility; and
- Poorer levels of health.

Moreover, research has shown that high school dropouts are themselves likely to have children who drop out of school. Thus, dropping out of school contributes further to the problem in later generations.

A number of studies have attempted to estimate the financial costs of dropping out to society. Levin estimated in 1972 that for dropouts ages 25 to 34 in 1969, who failed to finish high school, foregone income amounted to $237 billion per year. The result of this was a cost to the nation of $71 billion in lost tax revenues, plus an additional $3 billion in crime prevention costs: in all, a total loss of $77 billion annually. A recent replication of the study by Catterall (1985) estimated foregone income for the class of 1981 to be about $228 billion in lifetime earnings and about $68 billion in tax revenues to all levels of government.

Summary

Dropping out of high school entails many costs for both the individual and society. For individuals, the consequences are evident in lower rates of employment, employment in lower-skilled, lower-paying occupations; and in lower earnings. For society, the consequences are political and social, as well as economic. Society may suffer because unemployment and lost earnings lower tax revenues and increase the demand for social services. The dropout problem therefore needs creative solutions if the negative consequences of dropping out are to be mitigated in future years.

CHAPTER IV

PROGRAMS FOR DROPOUT-PRONE YOUTH OR DROPOUTS

A student's decision to drop out of school is often the combination of several factors. School experiences have frequently pushed students to the point where the costs of staying in school outweigh the benefits. Research has shown that such practices as grade retention, grouping and tracking students, and school suspension have a negative effect on at-risk students. They are more likely to alienate students than engage them in school.

Grade retention affects self-esteem, as it often results in students who are two or more years behind age-appropriate grades. Tracking students also results in lower self-esteem and undermines students' aspirations for the future. Students tracked in "low" groups gradually become isolated within a school and experience diminished access to more satisfactory learning conditions. They often experience higher suspension rates and subsequent labeling that contributes to their alienation from school and leads to dropping out.

Research also shows that students from neighborhoods that have high levels of unemployment, crime, and family instability are also more at risk of failing to complete school. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are asked about dropping out cite two main themes -- the lack of relevance of school to their future, and the interference of outside concerns with school.

Programs aimed at dropout prevention and recovery attempt to address many of these problems. They differ significantly, however, on a number of dimensions. The programs range in scope from small-scale supplementary services, such as counseling, to comprehensive school reorganizations. The most traditional approach used to respond to the problem of school dropouts is add-on programs, tailored to specific needs and community resources. Depending on the circumstances, program reforms may use multiple components such as academic remediation and case management, or they may comprise a single component such as individual or group counseling. Dropout prevention programs are designed to achieve a variety of program goals. They are also offered in diverse settings and provide a variety of academic and support services. The remainder of the chapter discusses aspects of various program reforms for dropout-prone youth and dropouts.

Dropout Programs Have Varied Goals and Objectives

The purposes and objectives of special dropout prevention programs are extremely varied. For example, some are academic, while others are geared toward promoting self-esteem. Many are designed to achieve short-term goals that will contribute to the longer-term goal of completion of high school. Some programs are designed to meet the needs of students who either have the characteristics of a potential dropout or who have behaved in ways that indicate the potential to drop out of school.

Dropout programs may take a variety of forms, each with a specific set of purposes and objectives. Examples include the following:

- Peer tutoring or computer-assisted instruction, with a teacher in a special classroom to help students master their academic work;
- Special counseling or mentors who work with students to help them improve their self-image;
- Outreach programs to ease the transition from junior to senior high school such as bringing last-year, junior high school students to a high school for an orientation, or having family counselors visit the homes of at-risk youth to involve parents in the transition process; and
- Special instruction outside the regular classroom setting for students, overage for their grade level, who may feel uncomfortable with younger students.

Although dropout programs are designed to achieve diverse goals, their objectives tend to cluster around four broad areas: 1) academic improvement; 2) attendance improvement; 3) personal and social adjustment; and 4) career preparation. While some programs focus exclusively on one of these areas, many more programs combine a number of these objectives. These goals were found in the programs selected for the original dropout study and in many of the programs participating in the **School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program**.

Improve Academic Performance

The main academic objective of most dropout prevention programs is to improve a student's academic performance sufficiently to attain a high school diploma or an equivalency certificate. However, most programs also have shorter-range academic objectives. Strategies to address these more immediate objectives include:

- Alternative curricula such as individualized learning programs, a thematic organization of subject matter, or competency-based curriculum;

- Alternative instructional techniques such as computer-assisted instruction, peer tutoring, and learning contracts; and

- Experiential learning through field trips and extracurricular activities.

Academic remediation is a key component of several schools visited in the original dropout study. Two schools -- the **Model School Adjustment Program** and the **Valued Youth Partnership** -- use a peer tutoring model. In the **Model School Adjustment Program**, 30 sixth-grade students, selected for the program each semester, spend three hours per week outside the regular classroom in tutoring sessions with seventh- and eighth-graders who are strong academically and can serve as role models for them. The tutoring sessions are designed to teach students the subject-area skills needed to pass skills tests for grade promotion and help students master material in their regular classes. The sessions are scheduled so that students are not pulled out for tutoring from the same subject more than once a week.

Students who are tutored receive an evaluation of their work and behavior after each session. This provides tutees with immediate feedback and, in combination with teacher evaluations, enables them to qualify for special prizes and awards for good performance.

The **Valued Youth Partnership** program uses junior and senior high school students as tutors for elementary school students. Students tutor four to five hours per week and are paid the minimum wage for their services. To prepare for the program, student tutors take a one hour per week training course in place of one of the regular tutoring sessions. The training course helps develop interpersonal communication skills, reading and writing skills, and knowledge about child development.

Washington State's **Educational Clinics** and Colorado's **Second Chance Pilot Program** use individualized instruction to improve students' academic performance. In the **Educational Clinics**, students who apply for the program are given a diagnostic test at the time of application to determine their placement and to establish their program of instruction. They are then assigned either to a high school reentry class or a General Equivalency Diploma preparation class that contains between 5 and 10 other students.

Classes meet three hours a day for five days a week. During class, students generally work independently to complete assignments in their program of instruction. At least one lesson a day in the reentry class, usually in social studies, reading, or science, is a whole-class lesson that involves an exchange between teacher and students.

Students are tested regularly in both types of classes to assess their progress and to schedule General Equivalency Diploma testing for students who are prepared for different portions of the exam. **Clinics** offer students up to 135 days of instruction (the maximum allowed for reimbursement by the state through the **Clinics** program), but will often keep a student in the program without state reimbursement when a student wishes to continue in the program.

Improve Students' Attendance

Another major objective of dropout prevention programs is to get chronic absentees to attend school more regularly. At the elementary school level, this objective is most frequently pursued through the use of incentives and rewards. At the high school level, where there are many more students per school, dropout prevention programs have frequently used computerized attendance systems to monitor student attendance.

One such system, currently in place in one of the New York City high schools included in the original study, can monitor, on a daily basis, student absences from school and from individual classes, provide daily reports on each student's attendance to a student's guidance counselor, and generate data for use in a computerized telephone system to notify parents of their child's absence from school.

Another dropout prevention program in **Community School District 18** in Brooklyn, New York, funded under the **School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program**, uses a computer telephone system in which a recorded telephone message is sent to the parents of students absent from school.

Other schools rely on personal contact. In the **Austin Independent School District**, home visits are made to at-risk students with attendance problems.

Improve Personal and Social Skills

Many dropout prevention programs attempt to assist students deal with personal, family, and social problems. The five most common objectives of such programs are: 1) to develop self-awareness and self-esteem; 2) to develop understanding of feelings and relationships with others; 3) to understand the consequences of school and life decisions; 4) to assist students cope with family and work problems; and 5) to improve rapport among students, teachers, and administrators and thus reduce the incidence of disciplinary problems and anti-social behavior. A variety of approaches have been used in dropout prevention programs to help students attain these objectives. These include:

- Individual and group counseling;
- Smaller guidance counselor/pupil ratios;
- Mentors, buddies, or special resource personnel to assist in personal and social problems;
- Release of teachers from other duties to provide counseling and more personalized relationships with pupils;
- Special assemblies, awards, and honors;
- Adult volunteers to counsel students;
- Use of social service personnel inside the school to provide services to students; and
- Case management.

Several programs reviewed in the literature and visited in the original study use one or more of these approaches to help students in their personal and social development. The National Association of State Boards of Education's **"Counselor/Advocates: Keeping Pregnant and Parenting Teens in School,"** a three-year demonstration project funded as part of the **Youth 2000 Initiative**, uses the services of a counselor/advocate to retain pregnant and parenting students in school. The two participating schools -- Bay View High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Bladensburg High School in Prince George's County, Maryland -- were selected on the basis of high rates of teen pregnancy. The programs employ a counselor/advocate to help students overcome obstacles to staying in school. The counselor/advocate accomplishes this by:

- Using a case management model for referring pregnant and parenting teens to needed health and social services in the community;
- Tracking students' attendance and academic progress and providing them with information about academic options and alternatives; and
- Serving as a personal counselor to pregnant or parenting students and helping them with decisions associated with staying in school.

Other components include the presence of a school nurse, a parenting class, and a problem-solving group which represents the school system, social services, and community-based organizations comprising a network of service referrals.

Another program especially designed for the cultural needs and expectations of low-income Hispanic females, ages 12 to 16, who are at risk of dropping out of school is "**Las Madrinas.**" Begun in 1986 in New York City by Hispanic American Career Education Resources (HACER), the goals of this three-year pilot program are: 1) to develop and heighten self-worth as well as the skills needed to stay in school; 2) to provide adult role models, permitting the girls to explore wider career choices through the mentor relationship; and 3) to create a social network of girls for support and stimulation of their levels of aspiration.

The mentoring interaction focuses on sharing experiences with a successful Hispanic working woman who can help the mentee during her career. It also seeks to build trust through a series of non-threatening opportunities for personal development. Mentors are required to devote a minimum of two hours every two weeks to the program and to attend, when possible, the mentors' workshops, scheduled field trips, and other activities with mentees. Mentors make a one-year commitment to the program.

HACER works with school personnel to arrange for an elective course offered once a week for an hour in the school, to refer potential candidates to the program, and to provide counseling as needed. There are currently 46 mentors (madrinas) and 56 mentees (ahijadas) participating in the program.

Counseling and mentors are also integral components of several of the dropout programs visited in the original study. Peer and family counseling are among the special services provided by the **Model School Adjustment Program**. Sixth-grade participants receive group counseling one period a week by seventh- and eighth-graders who were selected for the program based on their interest in the job and their sensitivity in dealing with other students and their problems. The peer counselors are trained by a clinical social worker who also serves as a facilitator during the counseling sessions. Family counseling sessions are held eight or nine times during a school semester -- once a week for 60 to 90 minutes -- and serve as a forum for parents to talk about their children's problems and learn more effective ways of working with them to promote their child's success in school.

The **Peninsula Academies** use both teachers and mentors to provide support to high-risk students. Teachers begin working with students upon entry into the program in the tenth grade and develop close personal relationships with their students. During their junior year, students are assigned mentors who are employees in local industries. While the mentor's primary responsibility is to communicate with students about the world of work, many provide students with support in other aspects of their academic and personal lives.

Counseling and mentors are also an integral component of the dropout program at **Middle College High School.** Upon entering the school, each student is assigned to a career education supervisor who serves as both a teacher and counselor to the student for the entire time he or she is at **Middle College.** During their first year in school, tenth-grade students take courses in personal and career development. The theme of the first cycle is personal identity; the second, preparation for an internship in a social service agency. A core of the most at-risk tenth-graders is also eligible to participate in a special group guidance program one period a day, five days a week, to help them cope with personal, academic, and social problems.

Two schools funded under **New York City's Dropout Prevention Program** use differing approaches to provide support services to dropout-prone youth. Far Rockaway High School uses a case management approach to help students deal with problems that would contribute to their dropping out of school. A community-based organization, the Federated Employment and Guidance Service, is employed at the school building. Consisting of a case manager and a team of human service workers, the group provides high-risk students with a variety of support services or refers students to services when they are not available at the school site. The team also includes a half-time outreach specialist who conducts home visits and other activities to keep parents involved with the student's education.

Roosevelt High School uses an alternative approach to meeting students' personal, family, and social needs. The school has reorganized the ninth grade into eight small clusters within the larger school to create a more personalized environment for the incoming students. Each cluster is organized around either a specific curriculum area, e.g., the business institute, or college discovery, or student academic needs, e.g., bilingual education. A single cluster contains between 175 and 200 students who receive additional support services from a coordinator/teacher, a guidance counselor, and two family professionals. Additional counseling and support services are provided by Pius XII, a community-based organization that is based in the school.

Prepare Students for Careers

Many dropout prevention programs, particularly at the high school level, are structured around career preparation objectives. While these programs often have specific objectives to meet the particular needs of individual students, their overall objectives are: 1) to reinforce the value of staying in school by linking school attendance and completion to employment and career opportunities; and 2) to develop career awareness and employability skills through vocational courses and on-the-job observation and experience.

The review of the literature of dropout prevention programs and of schools funded under the **Dropout Prevention Demonstration Assistance Program** suggests the variety of ways that programs combine approaches to promote career awareness development and on-the-job experience. For example, **Carbondale Community High School District 165**, a Demonstration Program grantee, provides the following services for dropouts: individualized diagnosis, attention, and assistance related to each student's academic/vocational needs that results in an individualized optional education plan; instruction in non-technical job skills necessary for employment; the provision of career and labor market information and assistance in finding employment; individual counseling to assist students in making academic/vocational choices; and opportunities for on-the-job training and award of credit for such training, along with the study of vocational-related information.

Another Demonstration Program grantee that provides job specific training with the end result of obtaining employment is the **Cooperative Alternative Program of the Coleman Independent School District** in Coleman, Texas. The alternative school teaches students between the ages of 15 and 21 basic skills in reading, writing, and math, using a self-paced approach that employs both direct teacher instruction and computer-supported instruction. The program also provides specific job training in building maintenance, food production, management, and service; business services; career advice; and referrals.

Media Academy, an inner-city school in Oakland, California, uses experiential learning to spur minority students with low educational and occupational aspirations toward higher goals and achievement. The school serves black and Hispanic youth in grades ten through twelve (Wehlage, et al., 1989). The curriculum, which centers on electronic and print media, is designed to provide students with knowledge and skills about media and communications to prepare them for entry into an occupation or enrollment in higher education. Students have "hands on" experience in the production of a school newspaper and a Spanish/English language newspaper targeted to the nearby Hispanic community. Direct involvement with the newspapers allows students to be exposed to a variety of tasks -- writing, photography, advertising, layout and design -- associated with print media.

In addition, **Media Academy** students work as a team, with younger students learning from more experienced peers. The modeling is used to convince black and Hispanic youth they can perform sophisticated and socially valued work that is also personally rewarding (Wehlage, et al., 1989). To further broaden students' vocational possibilities and provide them with role models within their own culture, students visit production facilities of newspapers, radio, and television, many of which are owned by blacks and Hispanics.

Career preparation is central to two programs visited in Pelavin Associates' original dropout study -- **Project COFFEE** and the **Peninsula Academies**. **Project COFFEE** provides instruction and occupational training to 120 students from 18 local school districts in central Massachusetts. Students are provided courses in five career areas: word processing; computer maintenance and repair; horticulture and agriculture; business education; and building maintenance and repair. The courses include class instruction as well as hands-on experience in the field.

Other services that enhance career awareness and job opportunities include: a weekly pre-employment class that covers job-search techniques, preparation of job applications and resumes, and interview skills; meetings with representatives of business and industry to discuss career opportunities; and unpaid internships arranged by occupational instructors with local businesses.

The **Peninsula Academies** program also provides technical training, career counseling, and work experience. Students receive instruction in computers or electronics in special classes that are integrated with the academic coursework. The electronics courses are organized around instruction models or packets that develop skills likely to be needed by local industry. The computer courses, in contrast, tend to be self-paced; students work more independently on individual assignments. As previously mentioned, **Academy** students in their junior year are assigned mentors who are employees from local firms. Students who make satisfactory progress during their first two years in the program are guaranteed a summer job after their junior year.

Types of Service Providers

Although schools have historically been the providers of dropout prevention services, other providers, including other departments of government, social service agencies, job training institutions, and private businesses, have entered the dropout prevention field. While it is difficult to delineate precisely the providers of dropout prevention services and the arrangements used to provide them, we use the following classification to suggest the range of different providers and settings for dropout prevention services. The classification includes: 1) school-based programs; 2) alternative schools; 3) cooperative/collaborative programs; and 4) non-school-based programs.

School-Based Programs

School-based programs, designed to achieve a wide range of objectives and to serve a variety of target populations, remain the dominant arrangement for providing dropout prevention services. The distinguishing feature of school-based programs is that teachers and other regular school personnel provide all the program services. Funding for the program is part of the school district's regular budget, but in some cases special funding is generated from state and Federal grants. The most common components of school-based programs include academic remediation in the form of tutoring or individualized instruction, special counseling or support services, career awareness or vocational training, and special activities to promote parent involvement.

An example of a school-based program is the **Cincinnati Public School Program** funded under the **School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program.** The program, located in Aiken High School and its feeder school, Schwab Middle School, is designed to prevent overage students from dropping out, strengthen their chances for graduation from high school, and improve their chances for success in the adult world. These goals are accomplished through the following intervention strategies:

- Participants are given an additional 240 hours of instructional time after school;
- Small-group instruction is provided for up to one hour each school day;
- A full-time counselor is assigned to deal exclusively with the needs of Project students;
- Part-time and summer jobs are provided for needy students, and job readiness skills are taught to all project participants;
- Frequent home contacts are maintained to reduce absenteeism; and
- Services from community agencies are increased to address health and related problems of students.

The **Model School Adjustment Program** and the **Valued Youth Partnership** are among the programs in the original dropout study that are school-based. As previously discussed, both of these programs rely on tutoring to improve students' academic skills and to enhance their self-esteem.

School-Based Alternative Schools

Alternative schools have generally been developed by public school systems to provide students who have difficulty adapting to the regular school setting with an alternative learning environment that is more compatible with their learning styles. Most alternative schools are organizationally part of the regular school district, employing regular program staff to provide instruction and support services. What mainly distinguishes the alternative school from a school-based program is its location in a separate facility and its greater individualization of the students' programs. Alternative schools tend to be typically small and flexible in planning activities to meet students' needs.

The **New Horizons Program of the Des Moines Public School District**, a grantee under the **School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program**, offers an alternative program at two alternative high school sites. This is a dropout retrieval program which provides students who have dropped out of traditional secondary schools with computer-assisted basic skills instruction in learning center laboratories located at the two sites.

Other examples of alternative schools from Pelavin Associates' original study are the **Satellite Academy** in New York and **Middle College High School**, located on the campus of La Guardia Community College in New York. The **Satellite Academy** has four campuses in three boroughs of the city. Through the use of individual contracts for work and credits, and mentors who work to establish a close relationship with students, **Satellite** attempts to help students increase their emotional growth and development, improve their academic achievement, and ultimately complete high school.

Middle College is divided into small "houses," each with its own students and staff. Students' socio-emotional growth is fostered in an environment that is friendly and supportive. Vocational experience is provided by having students spend one-third of their school year working at unpaid internships in various settings outside the school.

Cooperative or Collaborative Programs

Cooperative or collaborative programs generally provide dropout prevention services at the school site, frequently using a combination of school staff and the staff from an outside agency. Regular classroom teachers may, for example, provide instruction in academic coursework, while vocational training or guidance is provided by a social service agency, a job training institution, or a community-based organization. In some cooperatives or collaboratives, the school is a recipient of outside services, carrying out a coordinating function. In other arrangements, the school is a more active participant in the planning and implementation of the program, working closely with other service providers to ensure the most effective use of resources from all participating institutions.

Collaborations between schools and other agencies to prevent dropouts currently take varied forms and include different combinations of agencies and services. One such collaboration is **Project XL**, a cooperative effort of the Dallas Independent School District, the Dallas Communities in Schools Program, and the Classroom Management Discipline Program at Southwest Texas State University. The program offers students academic, job training, and support services including: basic skills and GED instruction; intensive, small group tutoring; vocational training, work study programs, internships, and other job connections; counseling for students and their families; day care for mothers who are participants; and referrals to outside social service agencies. The project is staffed by personnel from all three components of the program.

The **70001 Stay-in-School Program** is a collaboration between the 70001 Training and Employment Institute and secondary schools or school systems, including vocational technical schools, alternative schools, and traditional high schools. Schools contract with 70001 annually to provide training and technical assistance services, as well as operational and educational materials necessary to implement the program. The school retains fiscal and administrative control, while 70001 provides training and technical assistance. The program consists of three integrated components:

- Remedial academic instruction in basic reading, writing, mathematics, and communication skills using computer-assisted instructional systems, where appropriate, to meet the students needs;
- An in-school career organization that provides students with leadership and communication skills training through career-awareness and community-service activities; and
- A Job Readiness Curriculum through which students interested in employment after graduation (or after school) learn about available career options and skill requirements, as well as job finding, getting, keeping, and changing skills.

In addition, 70001 has developed a new program, the **WAVE -- Work, Achievement and Values in Education** -- which provides skill development and peer support through an alternative that can be implemented by secondary schools. The program, which will be implemented in 10 demonstration sites during the 1989-

1990 school year, includes a four-year curriculum and emphasizes the following:

- Basic skills remediation, including computer-assisted learning, study skills, and workplace literacy training;

- Career exploration activities and employability training; and

- Personal development activities, including involvement in a national organization known as the 70001 Career Association.

The primary instructional approach in all the content areas is experiential. The competency-based approach of the curriculum and peer tutoring are other aspects of the program.

Other examples of collaborative programs in Pelavin Associates' original study include the **Peninsula Academies** in Redwood City, California. At the **Peninsula Academies**, students attend both regular high school core academy classes and other required and elective classes at the regular high school. Classes for the electronics academy are offered at Sequoia High School; classes for the computer academy are offered at Menlo-Atherton High School. The core academy courses are offered in mathematics, science, the vocational specialization (electronics or computers), and English to students in grades 10 to 12. Most courses have a remedial focus, particularly those in math and science, but students who are more advanced academically can meet their requirements by taking more advanced courses in the regular high school.

The **Hispanic Policy Development Project** sponsors collaborations to develop dropout prevention programs for Hispanic youth. This non-profit organization encourages the analyses of public policies and policy proposals affecting Hispanics in the United States. The goals of each of the collaborations vary with the participating institutions. Examples include the following:

- The Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Leadership Development Conference of Vocational Education Sex Equity Coordinators collaborated to develop strategies for increasing the achievement and attainment of at-risk Hispanic females through vocational education.

- The **New York City Dropout Prevention Program** (cited previously), Metis Associates, Inc., Roosevelt High School, and Pius XII Youth and Family Services collaborated to identify and document specific organizational practices and conditions that offer high potential for decreasing dropouts and increasing opportunities for success among at-risk Hispanic students.

- Inner City Development, Inc., San Antonio, Texas, Intercultural Development Research Association, Brackenridge Elementary School, and Tafolla Middle School collaborated to create an after-school environment to help low-income Hispanic families become an integral part of the educational process and to evaluate and document strategies used in the family tutorial program. The tutorial program meets twice weekly and includes the following activities: tutoring centers and counseling for at-risk students and siblings; computer-assisted instruction for students; educational recreation for all family members; and a family meal at the center.

- The University of California at Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara School Districts, and Santa Barbara Junior High School collaborated in the **PEP-SI** (**Parent Empowerment Program/Students Included**) program designed to teach at-risk, adolescent, Mexican-American students and their parents how to deal more effectively with developmental and school-related issues. The program also attempts to facilitate students' transitions from primary to junior high school.

Non-School-Based Programs

Non-school-based programs, while still relatively small in number compared with programs operated by schools, have become more common in recent years, particularly as foundations and other outside funding sources have gotten involved in dropout prevention.

The **Summer Training and Education Program** is a multi-year demonstration project initiated with the support of the Ford Foundation and now supported by other foundations, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Labor under the Job Training Partnership Act. Managed by Public/Private Ventures, the **Summer Training and Education Program** aims to improve the life chances of 14- and 15-year-old disadvantaged youth by helping them remain on grade through graduation.

Through a combination of work, remedial education, instruction in life skills, and opportunities during the summer months, the program seeks to improve basic academic skills, help reduce summer learning losses and the likelihood of becoming a teen parent, and encourage youth to remain in school. Students enroll in the program for two consecutive summers and one intervening school year. In the summer, students receive intensive academic instruction including computer-assisted activities and silent reading, life skills instruction, and part-time paid-work opportunities. During the school year, students meet with counselors who monitor their progress. The demonstration project, which began operation in the summer of

1985 and continued through August 1988, operated in five cities: Boston; Seattle; Fresno, California; Portland, Oregon; and San Diego. Education classes were held at universities or in public schools, depending on the site. Worksites also varied with each city.

Another dropout prevention program operated by a non-school agency is the **Comprehensive Competencies Program**, developed by the Remediation and Training Institute in Washington, D.C. This program uses computers to determine a student's level of competency in various subjects and to provide instruction in areas where the student is weak. The approach is highly individualized and allows for self-paced advancement to progressively more difficult subject matter until full mastery is achieved.

The purpose of the Institute, supported by the Mott and Ford Foundations, is to increase both the effectiveness and accessibility of basic skills education. Trainees work at their own speed on academic skills, functional competencies such as reading want ads and calculating overtime, and pre-employment skills such as job seeking. They also practice skills necessary for the GED, obtaining a job, or continuing their education. The Institute currently oversees a network of over 200 learning centers nationwide in such diverse settings as community-based organizations, schools, correctional facilities, and job training centers.

Service providers entering the field of dropout prevention receive financial support from a variety of sources including: local governments in the area; state and Federal sources, including grants from the Department of Labor under the JTPA; and local or national foundations. In addition, schools and other providers are increasingly entering into collaborative arrangements under which schools and non-school agencies work together to provide a set of coordinated services for dropout-prone students and youth who have already left school.

Summary

Dropout prevention programs are moving towards a more comprehensive set of program services. Although academic remediation remains at the core of most programs, efforts are currently under way in many schools to deal with the whole child by providing personal support services and better preparation for the world of work. In addition, the dropout prevention field is witnessing the entrance of new service providers, many with the specialized experience to help students deal with their personal, family, and vocational problems. In some cases, these new providers work as adjuncts to the schools to support them in their efforts to meet students' needs; in other cases, they are working independently of the schools or as alternatives to them. The linkages between schools and other providers are, however, becoming more diverse and complex -- a trend that is likely to continue in the future as dropouts become an increasing concern at the local, state, and national levels.

CHAPTER V

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC DROPOUT INTERVENTIONS

Multiple program reforms have been implemented in school systems across the country. Yet there continues to be disagreement among researchers about what constitutes an effective dropout prevention program. Part of the difficulty is that many of the evaluations of dropout prevention programs lack sufficient rigor to establish definitively that the program is effective. As a result, judgments about program effectiveness are often subjective, rather than based on solid empirical data. Moreover, even when programs are designed to achieve similar objectives, they are often evaluated using different methodologies.

Another limitation of the research is that even where program components or characteristics have been identified as common to effective dropout programs, the literature generally does not discuss the way implementation of these components has contributed to program success. Finally, many reviews of the literature identify more than one component or characteristic to be common to effective dropout programs. The research does not, however, indicate whether certain components alone are sufficient to produce an effective program or what mix of different program features is needed to produce success in dropout prevention.

What "works" in one setting with a specific cohort of students and teaching staff may not be applicable to another environment. However, several characteristics emerge consistently in the dropout prevention literature as features of "effective" dropout programs. These characteristics fall into four areas: program organization; program staff; program services; and other program features.

During site visits to selected dropout programs, attempts were made to validate the characteristics identified in each of these areas. Program administrators and staff at each site were asked to identify the program elements that they thought were critical to their program's success and to assess whether the program elements identified in the literature were, in fact, important to the effectiveness of their program. To assess the relative importance of different program elements in contributing to the program's effectiveness, respondents were asked to rank specific elements on a scale that ranged from "very important to program success" to "not very important to program success."

In addition, the site visits to dropout prevention programs produced a set of summary observations that have direct implications for the development of dropout prevention and recovery efforts in other places. Some of these observations concern program organization and structure; others focus more on intangibles -- program leadership, styles of interaction among staff members and between staff and students, and parental and community involvement.

Program Organization

In the area of program organization, several program features associated with success in dropout prevention stand out. Among the features are:

- Small class and program size (Wehlage, 1983; High School Dropout Prevention Network of Southeast Michigan, 1985; Wehlage, et al., 1989);
- Low pupil-teacher ratios (Association of California Urban School Districts, 1985; Hamilton, 1986; High School Dropout Prevention Network of Southeast Michigan, 1985);
- Program autonomy (Wehlage, 1983; Association of California Urban School Districts, 1985; Wehlage, et al., 1989); and
- A supportive school environment (Wehlage, et al., 1989).

Many students who have not met with success in the regular school program have been alienated by a large, bureaucratic system that does not respond to their unique needs. The research suggests that these students may function better in smaller classes where teachers can relate to students more personally. In New York City's Dropout Prevention Program at Theodore Roosevelt High School, the ninth grade was reorganized into smaller clusters where students receive additional support from a coordinator/teacher, a guidance counselor and two family professionals. In such an environment, students develop the feeling that somebody cares about them and will work with them both to improve their academic skills and to help them deal with personal problems. As Wehlage points out, anonymity for students increases with class size, and teachers are less likely to feel accountable for individual students as numbers increase and personal knowledge of students decreases.

Schools that create a supportive environment can help students overcome impediments to a sense of belonging and social bonding to the school and its members, as well as impediments to educational engagement in classroom and academic work. In some cases, research suggests that it may be desirable to locate these classes outside the regular setting to remove students from an environment that may contribute to poor attendance and academic failure. For other students, programs can be located in the regular school setting, as long as they provide for more individualized instruction and more personalized pupil-teacher interactions.

Several aspects of program organization cited in the literature as critical to the success of dropout prevention and recovery efforts were generally confirmed in the responses of administrators and staff in the sample of programs included in the original Pelavin Associates' study. The most cited features were low pupil-teacher ratios and program autonomy. Small program size and an alternative program setting, two other organizational features deemed less critical to program effectiveness, were still cited by a large majority of respondents as important to program success.

Program Staff

In the area of the program staff, most reviews cite the following features as key to program success:

- Motivated, committed teachers (Association of California Urban School Districts, 1985; High School Dropout Prevention Network of Southeast Michigan, 1985; Intercultural Development Research Association, 1986; National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1986; Wehlage, 1983; Wehlage, et al., 1989); and

- Teacher autonomy (High School Dropout Prevention Network of Southeast Michigan, 1985; Wehlage, et al., 1989).

Motivated teachers are consistent with the program organizational characteristics discussed above. Program staff must have the ability to work effectively with a more difficult-to-educate population, the commitment to working with this population, and must have high expectations for students.

The rationale behind teacher autonomy is that teachers need to have the latitude to experiment with different instructional approaches, learning materials, styles of interaction, and scheduling to determine which are most effective in meeting the academic and personal needs of individual students.

Staff interviewed in site visits to dropout programs consistently identified several characteristics of staff and staff-student relationships as key to program success. Most important was the ability of teachers to develop one-to-one relationships with students and to provide them with individualized attention. Also critical to program effectiveness were high teacher expectations of students, clear communication of the program's goals and of students' responsibilities, and special praise for good work.

Observations at site visits also led to the conclusion that staff commitment and enthusiasm were enhanced by involving the staff in program development and implementation. People need to "buy in" to the program and develop a sense of ownership if they are going to make the program work.

The **Dropout Prevention Program** in the two high schools visited in New York City developed a sense of ownership and commitment to the program by using a team management approach to plan, implement, budget, and evaluate prevention strategies for their schools. The team consisted of volunteer teachers, paraprofessionals, aides, administrators, a dropout prevention coordinator, and the principal.

Principal leadership has been identified consistently in the literature as a key component of effective schools. Site visit observation indicated that, in programs that appeared to be working especially well, the principal played a special role -- that of an entrepreneur. The principal brought to the dropout problem the view that the school had to be willing to experiment with new approaches. These individuals worked hard to get additional resources to the school and sought out relationships with other community agencies to provide services to students in a setting outside the school. Staff in several programs in our study including Theodore Roosevelt High School and Far Rockaway High School in New York City, and the **Model School Adjustment Program** in Broward County, Florida were unanimous in their views that the dropout prevention programs could not have gotten off the ground without the commitment and dedication of the principal.

Program Services

Academic Services

Program services that are characteristic of effective dropout prevention programs tend to be in the academic and personal/ social domains. In terms of academics, the literature consistently finds that the following are key components of effective programs:

- Individualized instruction (Association of California Urban School Districts, 1985; Hamilton, 1986; Intercultural Development Research Association, 1986; National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1986; Wehlage, 1983; Pallas, Natriello, et al., 1988);

- Computer-assisted instruction (Hahn and Danzberger, 1987);

- A modified curriculum that responds to students' abilities and needs (Association of California Urban School Districts, 1985; Center for the Study of Social

Policy, 1986; Intercultural Development Research Association, 1986; National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1986);

- Cooperative learning (Earle, Roach and Fraser, 1987; Wheelock, 1988; Wehlage, et al., 1989); and
- A focus on basic skills (Association of California Urban School Districts, 1985; Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1986; Intercultural Development Research Association, 1986; National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1986).

Other reviews of the literature suggest additional academic components frequently associated with program success. These include:

- Block programming (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1986; Wheelock and Dorman, 1988);
- Experiential learning (Association of California Urban School Districts, 1985; Hamilton, 1986; Wehlage, 1983); and
- A combination program of work and study (Intercultural Development Research Association, 1986; National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1986).

In the sample of dropout programs in Pelavin Associates' original study, program staff viewed academic remediation as critical to the success of their programs. Program staff cited diagnosis of individual students' academic needs and the development of an individualized learning program tailored specifically to meet those needs as critical to program success.

Two other elements of the academic programs that were highly regarded by program staff were the concentration on basic skills and an interactive approach to teaching. Respondents also expressed the view that a "cooperative" approach to instruction, rather than a competitive approach, worked best with dropout-prone youth, since it provided a more supportive structure for student learning.

Another observation from site visits to dropout programs was that students needed constant rewards for progress in their academic work and personal behavior in order to overcome their poor self-image. Programs take varied approaches to providing feedback and reinforcement to the students. In **Project COFFEE**, students receive a mark every day for the work they complete. Similarly, in the **Model School Adjustment Program**, both peer tutors and classroom teachers fill out a report form every day in which students are rated on their work and behavior. Rewards in the form of free passes to movies or other attractions are given to students who receive a certain number of points during the course of the week and semester.

Block programming has been used in some programs at the junior high school and high school levels as a way to create a "family" environment for students. Under this arrangement, students take the same courses and move together as a group from class to class. They therefore have the opportunity to get to know both their fellow students and teachers much better and to develop a support system to help them with their academic and personal problems.

Experiential learning and work-study programs are both designed to help students understand that schoolwork has real utility outside the classroom. Through experiential learning, students "learn by doing." They apply their classroom knowledge in practical, day-to-day situations. Work-study programs generally involve a more flexible schedule so that students can both work and attend school. In the better programs, students' coursework is related to their job to make the school experience more meaningful to them.

Personal and Social Services

In addition to the academic services cited above, the dropout prevention literature identifies several personal and social services that are common to effective programs. These include:

- Effective counseling and development of "survival skills" (Intercultural Development Research Association, 1986; National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1986); and

- Development of bonds that connect the students to the school (Wehlage, 1983; Wehlage, et al., 1989).

Effective counseling can be achieved using a variety of techniques including small pupil-guidance counselor ratios and peer counseling. As indicated above, many students who drop out of school need a person who will really "care" about them and spend time helping them with their problems. This person could be a teacher, a counselor, a case manager, or mentor who can take an interest in the child. Where the person is a counselor, that person must have a small caseload of students so that he or she is able to relate to the child on a one-on-one basis and develop a "caring" relationship. The person could also be a fellow student who is having similar experiences. Women mentors, in addition to providing support for students, can provide positive role models in non-traditional occupations and help channel females into jobs where they can achieve economic self-sufficiency (Earle, 1987).

In the original Pelavin Associates' study, staff at dropout prevention programs consistently identified pupil support services as critical to program success. Counseling was viewed as a key element of program effectiveness. Individual counseling, both formal and informal, was identified as the best way to work with students in the program. Other forms of counseling including mentors, role models, group counseling, and, to a lesser extent, peer counseling were also cited as key to program success.

Virtually all of the programs visited in the study designated one or two individuals who were responsible for watching out for a group of students. The title conferred on staff varied with the program -- ombudsman, mentor, case manager -- but the person's role was fairly similar. These staff work with students, gain their confidence, show them that someone really cares about them, and arrange for them to get the help they need academically, personally, and vocationally.

Similar to the findings in the dropout literature, program staff in the programs visited recognized that individual students have multiple needs. The lack of academic progress was only one component of student need. Students' personal and social problems were particular foci of attention in nearly all programs and a variety of strategies were implemented to help students address them. Central to nearly all strategies was the commitment of time by one individual who would take a special interest in students and help them work through their particular problems.

The dropout programs included in the study also recognized that different students need different combinations of services to help them stay in school and complete their education. The case management approach, for example, was used in the two high schools visited in New York.

In Far Rockaway High School, a case manager assigned to each student works out the student's service plan and arranges for that student to receive appropriate services. Some services are provided by a community-based organization working in the school; when the organization is unable to provide the services, other agencies are contacted. In addition to case management, Roosevelt High School provides a PM school in late afternoon to accommodate students who cannot attend during regular hours; an on-site, child-care center where teen parents can leave their children while they attend class; and a variety of other support services for students.

Schools in the study further emphasized the need for school-to-school linkages to ease the transitions from elementary to middle or junior high school and then again from middle or junior high school to high school. The first transition is difficult because students are moving from a smaller school with self-contained classes to a much larger school with departmentalized programming; the second causes problems because students who continue to do poorly in school may not feel prepared, and thus may not even show up for high school.

The dropout programs developed a number of techniques to bridge the gap between these transitions. The **Valued Youth Partnership**, for example, links elementary and junior high/high school through the youth tutoring component of the program. Older students who are participating in the program come into the elementary schools to provide instruction to younger students and serve as role models for them.

Field visits by the program administrator of the **Model School Adjustment Program** to feeder elementary schools in the spring preceding students' entry into the middle school creates a linkage between the schools. During this time, students are provided information about the school and the program, and teachers are consulted to identify students who could benefit most from program services.

Roosevelt High School uses a similar technique, referred to as articulation, to facilitate the transition from junior high to high school. The articulation coordinator from the high school visits feeder junior high schools to explain the high school program and the special services the school offers to students, and to answer students' questions about the school. Students are also brought to the high school to familiarize them with the building and the staff. This helps them overcome their fears about coming to the school.

Collaborations Among School, Home, Work, and Community

Although academic and personal/social services are consistently identified as key to the success of dropout prevention programs, collaborations among school, home, work, and community have also been mentioned in one or more studies as associated with successful programs. These include:

- Preparation for employment (Association of California Urban School Districts, 1985; Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1986; Hamilton, 1986; National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1986);
- Parental involvement in the student's educational program (Association of California Urban School Districts, 1985; High School Dropout Prevention Network of Southeast Michigan, 1985; National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1986);
- Community involvement (Association of California Urban School Districts, 1985; High School Dropout Prevention Network of Southeast Michigan, 1985); and

- School-business collaboration (High School Dropout Prevention Network of Southeast Michigan, 1985; Intercultural Development Research Association, 1986; National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1986).

There is little guidance in the literature about the best ways to structure these components. Some researchers do, however, suggest areas that program designers need to be attentive to in developing collaborations between schools, other public and private agencies, and the private sector. Smith (1987), for example, stresses five elements for program designers to consider in structuring an interagency collaboration:

- People - Designers of collaborations must know who they have to work with and whether these people are in the right positions for the task;
- Interests - Program designers must recognize that participants in the collaboration may have different interests, even though they may share the same goal. Unless ways are found to deal with "turf" issues, the collaboration will not succeed;
- Agreements - Participants must have definitive agreements about what is going to be done, by whom, and during what time period. Ambiguity about roles and responsibilities may create difficult working relationships and unrealistic expectations for the program;
- Capacity - Program designers must recognize the strengths and limitations of participating organizations and their ability to carry out their responsibilities; and
- Resources - Successful collaborations require a relative balance in the contribution of resources by different participants. Where program responsibilities fall inordinately on only one or two collaborators, or where participants fail to provide the resources required of them, the potential for failure is greater than where the contributions of all participants are more equitable.

Summary

In summary, a variety of program components or characteristics have been found to be associated with effectiveness in dropout prevention. These include aspects of program organization, staff, and services, as well as relationships with parents and non-school institutions. Overall, the characteristics that emerged consistently in the dropout prevention literature as features of successful programs were also identified by the program staff at the sites selected for the study. These include:

- Small program size, low pupil-teacher ratios, and program autonomy;
- Individualized attention by teachers to students;
- Clear communication of program goals, students' responsibilities, and praise for good work;
- Individual or group counseling, and mentor programs;
- Learning programs that are focused on basic skills and based on a diagnosis of students' academic needs;
- Matching methods of instruction with student learning styles; and
- Cooperation between schools and businesses in programs to promote career awareness and job training.

It is important to note as a concluding observation that many of these components are characteristics of effective schools more generally, not just dropout prevention programs. Corcoran and Wilson (1986), for example, in their review of secondary schools cited for excellence by the U.S. Department of Education, find that several of the characteristics of effective dropout prevention programs are also found in effective secondary schools. These include teacher autonomy in doing their work in a culture of collegiality, positive student-teacher relationships fostered through one-to-one instruction and informal meeting during the course of a day, and a high degree of involvement by parents and community members in school affairs.

The characteristics of effective dropout prevention programs are also consistent with the recommendations of the Department of Education to improve the education of disadvantaged students (1987). These recommendations include the tailoring of instructional strategies to the needs of disadvantaged children -- partly through smaller class size and more individualized instruction, and the encouragement of greater parental involvement in their children's education.

CHAPTER VI

SCHOOLWIDE REFORMS

For the most part, the research on school dropouts regards early school leaving as a result of two factors: student and family characteristics, and school processes. The intervention strategies currently being implemented by school districts and other service providers are oriented towards "fixing" student and family problems. Although many of these strategies appear to be successful in meeting the needs of dropout-prone youth and dropouts, there is growing concern among researchers that creating short-term special programs does not necessarily get to the root causes of high dropout, suspension, truancy, and retention rates. Such high rates in many schools indicate that these schools, as they are presently structured, may not be able to serve the needs of a significant percentage of students.

The Rationale for Schoolwide Reforms

Several reasons have been put forth to support the position that program reforms are not sufficient to address the special needs of at-risk students. One is that targeted special programs for at-risk youth designed to remotivate, remediate, and retain potential dropouts are not necessarily designed to address the origins or conditions of academic failure, alienation, or teen pregnancy (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1988).

Another argument is that special programs may create other types of problems. Where the program does not "fix" the problems of the troubled students, an adversarial relationship may develop between teaching and counseling staff. Furthermore, teachers can more easily dismiss problem students by referring them to a special program that separates them from the mainstream classroom. The teacher no longer has to deal with difficult students.

Finally, special programs may not have the capacity to serve all of the students requiring special services. The challenge faced by an institution with a very high percentage of dropout-prone youth is different from that faced by an institution with few potential dropouts. The former cannot accommodate the varied needs of all its students by providing additional programs. These schools require an alternative.

Researchers and educators are looking to schoolwide reforms as a comprehensive approach to dropout prevention. Schoolwide reform, also referred to as "systemic school change" or "school-based change," refers to school improvement for one school or a system of schools within a district.

Although there is no one model of schoolwide reform, there is the shared belief that the current system must be rethought and redesigned in order to be more effective in meeting the demands of a changing society and in achieving commonly held goals (Harvey and Crandall, 1988, National Education Association, 1988). Schoolwide reform involves fundamental changes in traditional school organization, governance, policies, programs, practices, and behavior to improve student learning and development, the school climate, and student productivity.

Common Themes in Schoolwide Reform

Like other dropout intervention strategies, there is no one model of schoolwide reform that can be adapted to all schools (Goodlad, 1983, National Education Association, 1988, Wheelock and Dorman, 1988, David, 1988). Schools differ in their mix of students and staff, in the characteristics of the communities they serve, and in their past efforts to improve their educational services. Each school must therefore be restructured to meet the individual goals and mission it has identified within the particular community it serves.

However, the literature on schoolwide reform and current efforts point toward some promising ways to deal with youth at risk of dropping out of school. Many of these themes, summarized below, are overlapping and interactive with one another. Furthermore, many are an integral part of effective dropout prevention program reforms discussed previously.

Increased Autonomy At The School Building Level

The most common theme of schoolwide reform is increased autonomy at the school building level. The premise is that decisions made by the school community will be effectively and enthusiastically implemented because they are owned by the community. Principals and their staff have substantial authority and accountability to set school performance goals, to structure the schedule and patterns for daily instruction, to initiate new programs and activities, and to evaluate achievement. Massachusetts public schools, through the **Carnegie Schools Program**, can apply for state grant funds to develop management systems that provide increased autonomy for school-based professionals. Similarly, under the **New Futures Initiative**, funded by the Annie Casey Foundation, Lawrence, Massachusetts schools are using school-based management.

Teachers are given increased responsibilities, the chance to work collaboratively, and a greater say in school policies such as allocation of staff, curriculum selection and development, and textbook selection. In addition, they are held more accountable for results.

Greater Flexibility in Structuring and Scheduling School Programs

The traditional approach to organizing instruction, i.e., a seven-period day in which students are organized by grade level and teachers are organized by departments, fragments the school day and leaves little opportunity for consistent interactions among students or between students and adults in the building. Furthermore, in many secondary schools there is little communication among the teachers and little coordination of a student's overall program. Such a system exacerbates difficulties for the disadvantaged student, who lacks the outside resources to adjust to the situation.

Now classes may be organized (through team teaching and alternative school groupings, frequently called "schools-within-a-school" or "clusters") to provide greater coherence in program content and delivery. Team teaching, such as found in the Jefferson County Public School System in Kentucky, allows teachers and staff to work collectively in assessing student needs, developing instructional plans, and implementing these plans. Team teaching offers several advantages:

- A consistent team of teachers works with the same group of students, allowing students and teacher to know one another better;
- Teachers are given the opportunity to work collegially as a team, reducing the isolation many teachers face;
- Teams have the opportunity to develop a more integrated and interdisciplinary curriculum and program for their students;
- Teachers are given more decision making control over curriculum, the use of instructional time, and responsibility for monitoring student progress and maintaining parent contact; and
- Students with different learning styles are exposed to a wider range of teaching styles.

Clusters divide the entire student population of a school into groupings of students. They are attempts to create closer and longer interaction among a sub-group of students, as well as between that sub-group and a group of teachers and staff. The objective is to increase peer support, strengthen student attachment to the school, enhance student relationships with supportive teachers, and improve teacher and staff awareness of individual student needs, progress, and families. For at-risk students who feel alienated from school, the goal of clusters is to bond these students to the institution or at least to adults within the school. Seattle's middle schools, under a grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, have been reorganized into "clusters" to provide greater coherence in program content and delivery.

Innovative Instructional Strategies

More traditional approaches to curriculum and instruction such as the lecture and textbook approach are redesigned to accommodate the strengths and weaknesses of a diverse student population. New approaches to learning are being used to help all students acquire critical thinking skills. Approaches such as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and "teacher-as-coach" are being viewed as successful strategies that encourage students to become active rather than passive learners and provide opportunities for students of varying ability levels to work together while improving at their own individual pace.

Humanization of the Organizational Climate

The overall atmosphere permeating schools is personalized and nurturing. A sense of caring and belonging extends to all children and adults, as well as the larger school community. In Seattle's middle schools, for example, homerooms are being replaced with a teacher advisory period which will include counseling, group discussions, and life skills training. As with the effective schools model, students are made to feel an integral part of the school.

Policies affecting students and teachers are developed by all school constituents -- administrators, staff, parents, and students -- to create an atmosphere of trust and fairness. There is a belief that all students are important and all must receive a quality education. As noted in the effective schools research, there is an emphasis on clarifying and sharing high expectations for student performance and behavior for all students. Likewise, there is a high level of expectation that teachers, administrators, parents, and other community members meet certain standards and responsibilities.

Active Involvement of All Constituencies in the Community

Schoolwide reform efforts have emphasized increasing the active involvement of two significant constituencies -- the parents and the larger community. The school uses a variety of techniques to get parents involved in school activities so that students understand that parents place a high value on the school. This may serve to bolster student achievement and at the same time raise teacher morale. Involvement through parent advisory councils, classroom volunteers, and attendance at school functions are just some of the forms of participation being explored. In Massachusetts, for example, school-based planning teams must include parent representatives and a community representative. Schools may also remove barriers to parent participation by hiring staff that reflects the students' racial, ethnic, and language composition and providing parents with information and training on how to best support their child's education at home.

The school also seeks partnerships with area businesses and local colleges and universities, and works with community agencies. Various sectors of the community provide resources that benefit the whole child.

- Businesses provide work-study, apprenticeships, career awareness and education, and cooperative education programs;
- Local colleges and universities provide staff development, college students as tutors, and innovative learning programs; and
- Community agencies provide an array of supportive services to students and their families.

Case Management

A key component of reforming schools with at-risk populations is case management. Case management has been a common strategy in such fields as gerontology, mental health, and rehabilitation, and is just beginning to be applied in the field of education. While there is no single definition of case management, the strategy involves such varied activities as assessment, referral, advocacy, monitoring, and evaluation. A case manager/coordinator facilitates communication and effective transition among multiple school levels; among various service providing agencies (special education, juvenile justice, health, housing, public welfare, family counseling, day care, etc.); and among the school, community, and family of the specific student. Case management is a key element of the Annie Casey Foundation's **New Futures Initiative**.

The case management model varies from institution to institution. In some models, a case manager is assigned to one student and remains with that student for as long as she or he is in the district. In others, there are multiple case managers whose work is interrelated. A third model involves a support team which may be comprised of teachers, administrators, dropout and recovery program consultants, counselors, school psychologists, parents, and students who perform diverse functions in meeting the needs of the at-risk student.

Teacher Training

Teachers receive special training in new methods for teaching and ways of responding to the developmental needs of adolescents. Pre-service and in-service training promote the continued growth of teachers, providing them with current research findings in curriculum, teaching, and learning (National Education Association). Access to such information enables teachers to meet the unique needs of students from diverse multicultural settings and to assume increased responsibility in setting school performance goals.
Staff development and training takes on a variety of forms in order to revitalize teachers' skills (David, 1989). Some schools and districts mix formal staff development activities with informal exchanges with colleagues and visits to other schools. The overall philosophy is to expose teachers to new knowledge to enable them to create their own effective learning environments. Staff development includes diverse training in such areas as management, effective leadership, team building, bilingual education, hands-on math and science, reading comprehension, management of concurrent multiple classroom activities, and new instructional strategies that emphasize critical thinking. Staff development is a key component of the Jefferson County School System.

Pilot Efforts in Schoolwide Reform

In the past several years a number of national organizations, foundations, districts, and states have become involved in pilot programs to experiment with the concept of schoolwide reform. The approaches vary considerably to meet the needs of the particular locale. Changes run the gamut from an increase in school-site autonomy and shared decisionmaking to changes in the size and roles of the district office staff.

Some schools are changing how they are organized -- redesigning schedules and curricula, creating schools within schools, and demonstrating new structures in summer programs. Others are charging their staffs with greater accountability structures that provide parents with choices among alternatives. Some school districts are changing the structure of staff development -- offering a range of professional development opportunities to teachers and principals in training centers and on site. The remainder of this section briefly discusses some of these initiatives.

Schoolwide Reform in Seattle's Middle Schools

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) is engaged in a schoolwide reform effort with the 10 middle schools in the Seattle school system. The project is divided into two phases. Phase I, begun in February, 1988 with a grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, is concerned with creating a plan for action. During this phase, the Seattle Middle Schools Commission, a broad-based group made up of policymakers, community and business leaders, representatives from other public agencies, parents, and school personnel, was established to examine how Seattle's middle schools could be organized to serve educationally disadvantaged students more effectively and make recommendations for implementing changes.

Phase II, the implementation phase, began in the 1988-1989 school year with the two district middle schools with the highest percentage of at-risk students serving as pilots for the Commission's recommendations. These schools will implement the following changes:

- Create smaller units of organization, "houses within the schools," to promote better communication between students and teachers;
- Establish interdisciplinary teams of teachers to develop new materials and methods for curriculum and instruction;
- Initiate early identification of those students who are at risk of academic failure through expanding the **Dropout Prevention Retrieval** Program, a pilot project currently serving four middle schools;
- Select a parent/outside service coordinator to facilitate a partnership between families, community, and the schools; and
- Replace "homerooms" with a teacher advisory period which will include counseling, group discussion, and life skills training.

In addition, each middle school formed Leadership Teams, comprised of the principal and other staff members, to create school-wide plans for implementation of the recommendations in their individual schools. Each school will receive $6,000 for the training and support to carry out their plan. To ensure implementation of the recommendations, NASBE created an oversight committee (composed of a core group of people from the Seattle Middle Schools Commission and the Superintendent) that meets regularly to follow the progress of the project. NASBE regularly works with state-level policy makers, district staff, school building personnel, and community leaders to facilitate the changes.

The New Futures Initiative

In 1988, the Annie E. Casey Foundation launched an initiative to assist five cities (Dayton, Ohio; Lawrence, Massachusetts; Little Rock, Arkansas; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Savannah, Georgia) with high minority populations and severe youth problems in developing programs and initiatives that will foster institutional change in the existing youth services system -- school, health, recreation, youth services, income maintenance, child welfare, job placement, employment training, etc. The central premise of the program is that the pattern of personal and social outcomes for at-risk children can be changed by altering the institutional environment which shapes their values, skills, opportunities, and aspirations.

The **New Futures Initiative** has created two vehicles to support system reform in each city -- a multi-sector, politically empowered "collaborative" to plan and oversee the city's at-risk youth reform agenda, and "case management" agents to plan and coordinate services needed by individual youth. The objective of the initiative is to:

- Improve the academic level of at-risk students;
- Increase school attendance and graduation rates;
- Increase youth employment after high school; and
- Reduce the incidence of adolescent pregnancy and parenthood.

The initiatives in each city vary with the needs of the community. However, each city has selected a "lead agency" that is responsible for assuring implementation of **New Futures**. For example, in Dayton the lead agency is the school district, while in Pittsburgh, Savannah, and Little Rock new, non-profit, umbrella organizations were established.

Schoolwide reforms differ in each city.

- Dayton plans to create middle school clusters to permit interdisciplinary planning among teachers and individualized instructional plans for students. A new non-profit corporation will administer the case management component. The case managers/community associates will be hired by the corporation and are responsible for accessing and integrating a network of services to enhance a student's natural support system.
- Lawrence will utilize a school-based management system with increased roles for administrators, teachers, and parents.
- Little Rock will concentrate on team teaching the core curriculum to junior high school students.
- Pittsburgh will integrate the school more into the community. The day will be expanded to allow recreation, tutoring, and community activities during the afternoons

and evenings. Teachers and counselors will work out educational plans with each student, and community agencies and businesses will offer courses and intern opportunities.

- Savannah will establish a "STAY" team (Services to Assist Youth) that includes an academic facilitator, psychologist, public health nurse, counselor, social worker, and a specialist to instruct students during any in-school suspension to develop personal school success plans. The STAY team follows a student until the eighth grade, when a case manager is assigned to the student.

While the key element in evaluating this program will be its impact on youth, the program will also be evaluated on how schools are organized, how teachers teach, how parents become involved, how resources are allocated, how students are rewarded, and how accountability is established to improve the local environments for the at-risk youth.

District Initiatives

Several school districts have begun to experiment with structural changes. Among them is the Jefferson County Public School (JCPS) system in Kentucky, an urban district with 153 schools. The major emphasis has been on professional development -- providing new knowledge and skills that teachers and administrators want and need. Leadership is provided by the school system Superintendent and the Gheens Professional Development Academy.

The Academy, funded predominantly by the local Gheens Foundation, serves both as a resource for the continuing professional development of JCPS staff and as a center for restructuring efforts. In addition, the Academy has fostered Professional Development Schools to carry out the concepts of restructuring. Schools interested in becoming a Professional Development School were required to vote and write proposals to become candidates for participation. Currently 24 schools are participating. The restructuring effort in Jefferson County has included the following:

- Middle schools are organized into mini-schools, each with about 150 students run by a team of five teachers, one of whom plays the role of "team leader." Each team makes its own decisions about instructional methods, curriculum, scheduling, and materials. Different teams create different environments, enabling students to find a better "fit" between their learning style and the teaching style.

- School staff are more actively involved in defining and developing measures of success. Each school writes a school improvement plan based on descriptive school profiles provided by the district.

- Two elementary Professional Development Schools are initiating an experiment in multi-age grouping in which the same teacher will remain with a group of students for several years.
- Staff from JCPS and the University of Louisville have created "job descriptions" for student teachers that reflect the particular roles and responsibilities these teachers will be expected to fulfill in different assignments.

State Initiatives

The role of states in the schoolwide reform movement can be a significant one, primarily by stimulating local innovation. The National Governors' Association cites the following six areas in which states can provide leadership:

- Articulate a vision of reformed schools;
- Encourage local experimentation with various school structures;
- Reduce unnecessary administrative and regulatory barriers to experimentation with promising approaches;
- Provide ongoing implementation support and technical assistance to schools and districts trying new approaches;
- Link rewards and sanctions for schools to their performance; and
- Research and disseminate results to other schools.

The Education Commission of the States reports that one-quarter of the states are experimenting with schoolwide reform. Massachusetts is among the states taking the initiative. In January, 1988, the Massachusetts Legislature enacted the Carnegie Schools Program as part of the provisions of Chapter 727, An Act Enhancing the Teaching Profession and Recognizing Educational Achievement. The $1.5 million grant program provides support to public schools for the development of management systems that provide increased autonomy and discretion for school-based professionals, and which encourage innovative organizational strategies to enhance student learning.

Under the program, schools were required to submit an application to the Board of Education. The plan was developed by a school-based planning team consisting of the building principal, at least five teachers elected by their peers and two other professionals employed at the school, two parents of children attending the school, and one community representative. For schools with grades 9-12 inclusive, a student representative is elected annually by other students. Applications included a detailed description of how the school governance will be restructured; how increased student learning will be achieved; and the school's objectives covered in each of the three years of the plan.

School plans approved by the Board of Education receive planning grants for one year and implementation grants for up to three successive years. Participating schools receive technical assistance from the state and may request waivers from regulations, local school policies, or contractual obligations that are necessary to implement their plan. In August, 1988, seven schools were awarded $30,000 in planning and implementation grants.

Summary

Schoolwide reform requires major changes in the ways schools are currently organized and the rules and incentives under which they operate. Many policymakers and educators, however, believe that to meet the increasing demands of the 21st century, educational reforms must move beyond those initiated within the existing school structure. As such, the emphasis on schoolwide reforms is concerned with altering the roles and responsibilities of educational personnel, providing staff development, providing greater flexibility in structuring and scheduling school programs, offering innovative instructional strategies, providing a personalized and nurturing climate for learning, employing case management for at-risk students, and involving all constituencies in the community.

CHAPTER VII

FEDERAL AND STATE RESPONSES TO THE DROPOUT PROBLEM

With increased concern over the magnitude of the dropout problem, Federal and state policymakers have initiated various programs to address the needs of at-risk youth. Several of the most important initiatives taken by the Federal Government and states to address the dropout issue are discussed in this chapter.

Federal Responses to the Dropout Problem

Federal policymakers have responded to the growing problem of school dropouts in a variety of ways. Government agencies, either independently or jointly, are funding projects that address the needs of in-school, dropout-prone youth and school dropouts. The U.S. Department of Education has sought to obtain comprehensive information on the size and nature of the dropout population and has recently funded two major demonstration programs focusing on dropout prevention. The U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Labor are jointly funding a number of projects in these areas. Several of these programs are briefly discussed below.

U.S. Department of Education

The U.S. Department of Education has responded to the dropout problem on a variety of fronts including enhancement of data collection efforts and funding of major demonstration programs. Three major efforts are underway to obtain comprehensive information on the size and nature of the dropout population.

Office of Special Education Programs. During the 1984-85 school year, OSEP began collecting data on the size and nature of the exiting population of secondary-age special education exiters. States report data on the number of special education students (defined as youth aged 14 and older who had received special education and related services during the previous school year but who were no longer receiving special or regular education services). These data are reported according to the exiting student's handicapping condition, age, and exit status -- graduated with a diploma, graduated through certification, reached the maximum age for which services are provided in the state, dropped out, or other reasons (basis of exit unknown, deaths). The categories for exit status are mutually exclusive.

OSEP partially funded a recent national study which provides information on dropout rates for a subset of handicapped and non-handicapped students by population density. The 1987 High School Transcript Study (HSTS) collected detailed information on handicapped and non-handicapped students enrolled in the eleventh grade in a national sample of comprehensive high schools in school year 1985-86.

In addition, OSEP is currently funding SRI to conduct the five year National Longitudinal Transition Study. This nationwide survey, funded at $5.5 million, has also provided data on the rate of students dropping out by handicapping condition and various other personal characteristics.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). As discussed in Chapter II of this report, NCES is providing support to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to develop a dropout reporting model for districts and states. The Education Data Improvement Project has focused its efforts on improving the comparability, comprehensiveness, and timeliness of data reported annually by states about public schools. A common definition of dropouts and a set of guidelines and procedures were developed for collecting dropout statistics and computing dropout rates. The project focused on the frequency of data collection, the types of data that would be useful for policy making, and the ways of reporting dropout rates.

The model calls for the total number of dropouts within a given year to be counted, after assigning each student who leaves school to one of the non-dropout "leaver" categories. The project also makes the following recommendations:

- o Collect data for students in grades 7-12 to help identify dropout problems of younger children; and
- o Collect dropout data according to racial and ethnic group and by sex within racial and ethnic group.

NCES also convened a task force to look at ways of facilitating the electronic transfer of student records from district to district and from districts to institutions of higher education. This system would reduce the paperwork required in the transfer of student records and speed up the process.

In addition to the data collection activities, program offices within the Department of Education are funding a variety of demonstration programs. Several of these programs are discussed below.

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. The **School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program**, directed by the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, funds projects that target economically and educationally disadvantaged students who are at risk or who have already dropped out of school. Eighty nine project grants, totaling $50 million, have been awarded in this program which operates from August 1988 to August 1990. Each project must be operated as part of a school or alternative school, or through community-based organizations, service delivery agencies, or educational partnerships. Services are provided during the school day at the school site, and often supplemented by alternative school, after school, or summer school programs. The programs frequently provide support services such as counseling. Most projects receive supplementary funding from local sources.

Office of Vocational and Adult Education. The goals of the **Carl D. Perkin's Cooperative Demonstration Program**, directed by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, are to improve the quality of vocational education, to help students develop the skills necessary for productive employment immediately following school, and to alleviate current shortages of skilled workers in certain fields. Grants are given to projects which are based on proven successful programs. Projects are funded for three years, beginning in August 1989. Ten project grants, totalling $9 million, have been awarded; nine are operated by or with high schools, and one is operated at a community college level.

Office of Special Education Programs. Although most of its programs are research oriented, OSEP is currently funding a new intervention program for junior high school students, targeting seriously emotionally disturbed and learning disabled children. This program will award three grantees -- two universities and a social science research firm -- approximately $3 million over a five-year period. In addition to Federal funds, grantees are expected to support their projects with in-kind contributions from universities. Increasing school engagement, which is defined as level of participation and sense of belonging, will be the strategy used by the three programs. The first year, grantees will develop intervention plans; the next four years, they will test the design in pilot programs in junior high schools. Each program will focus on dropout prevention for learning disabled and seriously emotionally disturbed students who show very high dropout rates. OSEP anticipates that the grantees will include supportive services such as counseling and parental intervention. Because intervention is very costly, the grantees are required to rate their intervention methods by effects and cost so that schools can select cost efficient strategies after the pilot programs conclude.

U.S. Department of Labor

The U.S. Department of Labor administers the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), which provides training and employment services for poor, unemployed individuals -- youth and adults --

and dislocated workers. Title IIA of JTPA, Training Services for Disadvantaged Youth, requires that 40 percent of the funds allocated to local areas be spent on disadvantaged youth between the ages of 16 and 21. Services to 14- and 15-year-olds may be counted if they are enrolled in pre-employment skills training. Basic skills remediation and literacy training are a major focus of JTPA programs and are an important part of the training services under Title IIA. In addition, other training includes vocational exploration, work deportment training, work experience, occupational skill training, job development, and job placement. Supportive services such as child care and transportation are also available to help youth maintain their participation in the program. Maryland's Tomorrow program, discussed in the following section, is partially supported by Title IIA funds.

To enhance basic skills and literacy training, three pilot programs were specifically designed for disadvantaged youth. The **Summer Training and Education Program**, discussed in Chapter IV, combines reading and math instruction and "life skills" instruction with work experience during the summer months. The objective is to improve disadvantaged youths' basic academic skills, help them reduce summer learning losses, encourage them to remain in school, and reduce the teenage pregnancy rate. Its long-term goals are increased school attendance, higher graduation rates, and better employment prospects after graduation. The program is supported by the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services, several foundations, and Title IIB of JTPA.

JOBSTART combines occupational skills training with self-paced, individualized basic skills instruction and counseling under a variety of organizational arrangements. Participants in the program read below the eighth-grade level.

Job Corps, Title IV of JTPA, is conducting a controlled evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of computer-assisted, basic skills instruction. The Job Corps programs give equal weight to basic skills and occupational skills training.

The Department of Labor is also jointly funding a number of projects that will link JTPA to local social services and education groups to provide comprehensive services in a variety of ways. For example, the **Cities in Schools** program is a cooperative effort of the Department of Labor, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Justice. It is an experiment to seek community ownership in developing solutions to the problems of dropout-prone youth. The program brings parents, employers, and community agencies into schools in 15 states to supplement standard educational instruction and counseling. This helps these youth stay in school, and reduces school-related violence.

Many of the programs supported by the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services are part of their **Youth 2000** campaign. Among the objectives of the **Youth 2000** campaign are to: decrease the number of high school dropouts, increase the reading and general literacy levels of youth, and reduce teen pregnancy and substance abuse. Programs support in-school youth, recent school dropouts, and out-of-school youth.

The Department of Labor has also funded a $2.8 million program to help seven U.S. cities to reach and teach potential high school dropouts. Los Angeles, Cincinnati, Denver, Newark, Detroit, Wichita, and Stockton (California) each received $400,000 to develop and staff alternative schools to serve the needs of high school youths who are about to drop out of regular city schools. The program expands upon an alternative school in Brooklyn, N.Y. known as "High School Redirection." The school serves highly at-risk youth and includes an intensive reading program. The grants were partially funded under the JTPA research and demonstration program and by local sites during the first two years; the project was totally funded by local sites during the third year.

State Responses to the Dropout Problem

All 50 states have some level of activity in dropout prevention, but it varies tremendously among the states. New York, California, Florida, and North Carolina, for example, have funded dropout prevention and recovery initiatives at relatively high levels. Several other states are either supporting dropout prevention initiatives or are in the process of planning and developing programs. Still others have established state policies to encourage local school districts to develop such programs. Even in states where the dropout issue appears to be dormant, bills providing for prevention or recovery programs have often been introduced into the legislature, although to date they appear to have had very little impact.

State dropout prevention and recovery programs can be distinguished on a number of key dimensions. These include general program strategies, grants strategies and funding mechanisms, and program services.

General Program Strategies

Three basic program and funding strategies operate in the states to meet the needs of dropout-prone youth and school dropouts:

- Grants for demonstration programs or model programs;
- Grants for research and dissemination; and

- Grants for regular programs.

Demonstration or Model Program Grants are currently used exclusively by states to fund dropout prevention activities where resources are relatively scarce and where the state is either unwilling or unable to provide extensive program funding. Under this strategy, the state generally awards funds through a grants competition, soliciting proposals using different models for serving dropout-prone youth.

Research and Dissemination Grants are used by states to identify model programs and disseminate information about them statewide. Some states provide additional funding to special units in the state education department, while others fund institutes of higher education to carry out these activities. Again, this strategy is used where resources are limited.

Regular Program Grants are used by states with greater resources to fund programs that support dropout prevention activities. These grants usually involve two stages: planning and implementation. The planning grants, funded at relatively low levels, help school officials develop a program, determine its staffing and resource requirements, and put into place the resources and materials to implement the program on a full scale. The implementation grants carry out the plans that were previously developed.

Types of Grant Strategies and Funding Mechanisms

States use a variety of mechanisms to fund dropout prevention programs. The principal mechanism is the categorical grant, which specifically earmarks funds for dropout prevention activities. Other mechanisms include general formula aid and cost reimbursement. These are described below.

Categorical Grants are of two kinds: competitive (all school districts may submit proposals, but preference is given to school districts with particular characteristics) and targeted (only school districts with a high incidence of dropout-prone youths can submit proposals). In most of the discretionary grants programs, funds are distributed by the state based on budgeted or anticipated total program costs.

General Formula Aid is used in other states to fund dropout prevention programs. In general, the basic school aid formula is used to provide each school district with additional sums of money. This funding mechanism is provided in states where a relatively large number of school districts have high dropout rates. Under the general aid formula, program funds are usually generated through a combination of state and local revenues, rather than from state funds exclusively.

Cost-Reimbursement is also used in some states as a strategy to fund dropout programs. Rather than providing funding for districts based on anticipated or standard costs, programs are reimbursed for costs previously incurred.

Types of Program Services

States use dropout prevention funds to provide a broad range of services for dropout-prone youth and school dropouts. These services include:

- Academic improvement programs for dropout-prone youth and school dropouts encompass a variety of interventions including: alternative schools or classes, alternative curricula and instructional techniques, and extracurricular activities.
- Attendance improvement programs emphasize improving contact with parents, providing rewards for attendance, and improving recordkeeping.
- Personal adjustment programs emphasize individual or group counseling, family counseling, mentors, case management, and frequently, cooperation with social service agencies to provide services to students.
- Career preparation and job training programs offer career counseling and seminars on employability, internships with community service agencies or private employers, modified scheduling to permit after-school employment, and in some cases, guaranteed employment upon completion of the program or a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Major State Programs

Several states have received a great deal of attention for their support of dropout prevention and recovery programs. Some states are experimenting with restructuring as a means of addressing the needs of all students. To provide a better perspective on state dropout and prevention activities, the key features of several state programs in operation in 1989 are summarized below.

California. The state passed a major five-year dropout initiative in October 1985 under Senate Bill 65 (SB65) to help school districts improve their abilities to keep youth in school. In addition to increasing school districts' flexibility to use other categorical aid to develop comprehensive, long-range programs to meet the needs of high-risk youth, SB65 contained several major dropout prevention components.

- Motivation and Maintenance Grants are designed to help schools develop plans to overcome the problems faced by "high-risk" youth. In the first cycle, 1985-1986, approximately 200 schools -- 50 school complexes of four schools each -- received $2 million in planning grants under the program. High schools received grants of $6,000; middle schools and elementary schools each received grants of $4,000. In the second stage, $8 million was allocated for implementation grants to have outreach consultants assist schools in implementing these plans, and an additional $2 million was allocated for a second cycle of planning grants.

- Alternative Education and Work Center Grants are targeted grants to districts with high dropout rates. Their purpose is to: 1) teach basic academic skills; 2) operate a diagnostic center to determine the pupils' needs; and 3) provide a combination of on-the-job training, counseling, and placement services. Union high school districts received planning grants of $8,000 in 1985-86 and an additional 50 districts received grants in 1986-87.

- A model program repository, established at a funding level of $340,000, consists of programs to improve the performance of at-risk pupils in basic skills, problem solving, and critical thinking. The repository also collects information on intervention strategies to improve the academic performance of at-risk youth, increase pupil attendance, and establish a positive school climate and safer schools. School districts can apply for adoption grants not to exceed $5,000 to institute a dropout prevention program listed in the repository.

- Educational Clinics, established in the spring of 1986 and continuing through the 1987-88 school year, were designed to help school dropouts improve their basic academic skills sufficiently to return to an educational program and obtain a diploma or its equivalent. In 1986-87, $2 million was provided to nine public and private entities in the form of reimbursements for diagnostic assessments and up to 225 hours of instruction to enrolled students. The impact of the educational clinics was evaluated at the end of 1987-1988, with no decision to date on the continuance of funding.

The State Department of Education, along with several public and private agencies, joined together to form the California Local Educational Reform Network (C-LERN), with the objective of helping low-performing schools become effective schools. C-LERN is designed to provide these schools with access to problem-solving mechanisms through an integrated and structured process that will enable them to identify factors which inhibit change and improvement. C-LERN will also identify and direct available resources to assist schools in the transition to become more effective.

C-LERN is a five-year process that involves an outside change agent at the school site on a weekly basis. Schools contribute $10,000 for each year of the five-year process to defray costs, which are estimated at between $35,000 and $50,000.

Colorado. The state is currently funding three dropout initiatives. In 1985, the Educational Quality Act included dropout prevention as part of the reform package. The **2 + 2 Dropout Prevention Program** is utilizing several strategies to attack the dropout problem. Until June 1989, a select number of districts received funding under demonstration grants to pilot projects that had promise for reducing the dropout rate. Between 1985 and 1987, Colorado spent about $480,000 on nine pilot projects around the state. In 1987, the state began to reduce its funding role, with the individual districts assuming financial responsibilities for the program.

Projects concentrate largely on early intervention and prevention programs for young children. These include home/school liaison people working with families of elementary school children, summer programs, mentorships in cooperation with local businesses, attendance projects, and parent support programs. The state is currently providing technical assistance to these districts.

Since July 1986, Colorado has also been providing funding for the **Second Chance Pilot Program** for youth age 16 to 21 who have dropped out of high school. The program is designed to provide students who have not completed a high school diploma or an equivalent certificate with the opportunity to complete the requirements for them. Public schools that are located in or contiguous to school districts with a dropout rate above the statewide average, or that offer vocational, technical, or adult education programs, are eligible to operate **Second Chance** programs.

Districts operating the program receive funding under the state's general aid formula, based on the number of students in the program and the authorized revenue base in the student's district of residence. The operating district receives either 85 percent of the state funds that the home district would receive for the student or the cost of the program, whichever is less. The student's home district receives 10 percent of state funds and the state retains five percent of the funding for administration. In an effort to improve dropout data collection, the state legislature required the state board of education to expand its collection of data on school dropouts to include grades seven through twelve beginning in 1987. Prior to this date, data included only grades ten through twelve.

With a focus on early intervention, the State Department of Education in January 1989 instituted a preschool program for language development to serve 2,000 four-year-olds who have been identified as at-risk children. Funded by the School Finance Act, with an appropriation of $850,000 from January 1st through June 30th, the program links parents, early childhood service providers, and representatives from human resource agencies in the delivery of services to children participating in the program. Students from 34 districts are currently participating.

Connecticut. The Connecticut State Department of Education, in accordance with Public Act No. 84-423, established a student dropout prevention grant program effective July 1987. The 25 school districts are identified as having the greatest need using a dropout need index, and are eligible for grants ranging from $11,000 to $90,000 for each of the pilot program's three years.

The program for 1988-89 was funded at $813,000. Each district is required to submit a program proposal including a three-year project plan. Funding covers the planning and needs assessment process; review of successful intervention strategies and selection of effective interventions to meet the needs of the district; implementation of district and school plans; and project evaluation and dissemination.

A major goal of the grant program is for the department and the participating districts to develop a common definition of dropouts and to develop a uniform methodology for reporting actual dropout information. Districts not eligible to participate in the pilot program may apply for a competitive dropout prevention grant.

Florida. In 1984, Florida established the **Model School Adjustment Program** to develop and evaluate research-based model dropout prevention programs for students in grades four to eight who were likely to become academic underachievers, failures, truants, or dropouts, or students likely to manifest severe behavioral problems. Since its inception in 1985, the state has used a grants competition to award funds to school districts.

In 1984-85, five grants totaling $322,000 were awarded, with grants ranging in amount from $37,500 to $87,000; a research and validation grant of $53,000 was also awarded to Florida Atlantic University to identify variables present in middle school years which are predictive of failure or disruption in education. In 1985-86, 10 grants totaling $976,600 were awarded, along with a research and validation grant of $99,700. The programs use a variety of strategies to meet the academic and behavioral needs of high-risk students.

Beginning in 1986-87, Florida required that all school districts establish a remediation program. Under the program, qualified school personnel shall meet with and counsel students identified as potential dropouts and, where possible, the parents or guardians of such students, to attempt to alleviate the conditions and problems that contributed to the identification of these students as potential dropouts.

Under the Dropout Prevention Act of 1986, school districts requesting state funding for a dropout prevention program were encouraged to establish comprehensive dropout prevention plans designed to meet the needs of students who were not effectively served by traditional educational programs in the public school system. Districts must designate an administrator to oversee plans which include the following components: parental, community, and business involvement; interagency coordination; early identification of potential dropouts; dropout retrieval activities; and employability skills and career awareness activities related to preparation for the work force. Specific program topics include educational alternatives, discipline, substance abuse, and teen-parent and youth services.

Beginning in 1986-1987, the Department of Education, with funds authorized by the legislature, started a grants competition to award funds to public or private nonprofit entities implementing dropout retrieval activities or community-based dropout prevention programs.

The Florida Center for Dropout Prevention, funded on a competitive grant basis, was established to conduct research, identify exemplary programs, provide technical assistance to school districts, and make recommendations concerning such issues as standardizing definition and data collection activities.

Maryland. In 1988, the Maryland General Assembly established **Maryland's Tomorrow**, an interagency, multi-funded dropout prevention strategy providing individualized, year-round, in-school programs for at-risk students. Program goals are threefold:

- To increase the academic skills of at-risk high school students;
- To increase the percentage of these students who complete high school; and
- To increase their chances for success in postsecondary education or in the workplace after graduation.

The program is funded at $3.1 million, primarily from Maryland's state budget and augmented by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) eight percent and Title II-B funds. Funds are delivered to local school districts through the JTPA Service Delivery Areas.

Eligible students must be at least one or more grades behind grade level (as measured by the eighth grade total reading or math scores on the California Achievement Test), or have been retained in grade at least once. Key components of the program include:

- Basic skills remediation, including computer-assisted instruction, tutoring, and special curriculum development;
- Motivation, life skills, and leadership development to increase self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Student support systems including mentoring, case management, peer support groups, etc.;
- Work experience in paid and unpaid employment, community service, etc.; and
- Transition services such as job search, apprenticeship-school linkage, and employability skills training.

Massachusetts. The Massachusetts legislature passed the School Improvements Acts of 1985 establishing the **Chapter 188 Dropout Prevention Grant Program**. The program provides discretionary grants to school districts for dropout prevention. Funds are awarded as competitive grants to individual school districts to develop supplementary efforts for grades seven through twelve. Preference is given to districts with high concentrations of students from low-income families and documented high dropout rates for the most recent three years.

In FY 1987, 86 planning and implementation grants totalling $2.6 million were awarded. However, in FY 1988, with funding at $2.3 million, 42 grants were awarded. Programs implemented under the grants include remedial and tutorial programs; counseling programs; work study and cooperative education; programs for parents and community groups; pregnant and parenting teenage programs; and professional development for school personnel.

Beginning in FY 1990, grant applications must focus on systemic school-based change -- the reorganization of school-wide structure, policies, programs and/or services to improve student learning and development, the school climate, and staff productivity, while providing individual group support to those students requiring such support. In FY 1990, dropout prevention funds total $2.3 million, with grants up to $220,000, depending on the size of the school district.

In 1986, the Massachusetts Governor's Office, with a planning grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, established **Commonwealth Futures**. The overall goal was to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to help communities with the highest proportion of at-risk youth deal more effectively with dropout prevention and reentry. In each of the 13 cities funded, local planning teams composed of representatives from schools, business, government, and human services were established to develop community-wide service plans to lower dropout rates and assist youth with the transition to work and/or higher education. The major goals in each city are to build a youth serving system; make systemic school changes (instruction, policy, educational options, school organization); and build community partnerships.

Chapter 727, passed in 1988, established the **Carnegie School Grant Program**, funded at $1.5 million to encourage public schools to plan and develop innovative organization and management systems at the school building level aimed at providing increased autonomy and discretion for school-based professionals, and at enhancing student learning. Planning grants for one year and implementation grants for three successive years are awarded by the board of education. Schools may obtain waivers from local school policies, contractual obligations, or state regulations if implementation of their plan requires them.

New Jersey. The New Jersey Department of Education funds several programs for at-risk youth, with particular emphasis on urban youth. Included among the programs is a summer pilot remedial program, **High School Proficiency Test Summer Assistance Program**, for urban vocational students who failed the first administration of the test. In 1986, $1.5 million was provided to the 17 lowest performing districts to develop comprehensive remedial plans for students who did not pass the test. In 1987, $2 million in grants were awarded to 22 school districts that performed poorly on the test.

As an incentive for high school graduation and to provide New Jersey's businesses and industries with well-prepared graduates, the **10,000 Graduates,...10,000 Jobs Program** aims to place 10,000 urban high school graduates in entry-level jobs by 1992. During 1986-87, $2.1 million was provided for dropout programs in 15 urban districts. Programs provided instruction to prepare teenagers for the General Equivalency Diploma and offered personal and career counseling for urban dropouts. Some programs offer employment and job training opportunities.

To reduce disruption in the classroom, $1 million in grants was awarded for each of two years to six school districts developing alternative programs for chronically disruptive students.

Three new programs were scheduled to begin in September, 1989.

- **Nurturing for Success: Prekindergarten for Urban Children** is a three-year program that costs approximately $4 million per year. It is jointly implemented by the departments of education and human services. The purpose of the program, targeted to three- and four-year olds, is to promote the development of intellectual and social readiness for school.
- **Project P.A.S.S.: Promoting Alternative School Success**, provides planning grants of up to $7,500 each for 5 to 10 school districts to study and plan for alternative education programs based on models developed through the 1986-1988 state-funded grant programs. Districts successfully completing the planning phase are eligible to receive adoption grants of up to $150,000 each.
- **Twelve Together: Peer Support for Success** is a community-based peer counseling program involving a support group of 12 ninth-grade students who meet 30 times over a school year. Approximately 600 students comprising 50 units will participate in the project for which $200,000 has been allocated.

New York. In 1984, the New York State legislature adopted the **Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention Program (AI/DP)**. Under the program, school districts at or below the 10th percentile in attendance were required to submit a corrective plan to the Commissioner of Education. The plans had to include methods of identifying at-risk students in the eighth grade and specific actions to increase attendance and retention rates.

For the 1984-85 school year, the legislature appropriated $28 million for discretionary grants -- $22.4 million for New York City and $4.8 million for grants to 68 upstate districts that ranged in size from $3,000 to $528,000. In New York City's community school districts and in upstate districts, program funds were used most frequently to increase counseling time for students, to increase the number of referrals to outside agencies, and to increase parent contact.

For 1985-86, the law and regulations for the program were changed to require that school districts target funds for programs to school buildings with a truancy rate above the median for the school district and provide services to middle school students. New York City received $21.6 million to serve 27,450 students; 67 upstate districts received $5.3 million to serve 79,000 students. As in the previous year, increased student counseling was the service most frequently provided to students. The **AI/DP** funding level increased to $51 million in 1988-1989, with approximately $42 million awarded to New York City.

In 1987-88, the legislature adopted the **Attendance Improvement/ Dropout Prevention Grant Program**, funded at $1 million. Eligible school districts included rural districts, small city districts, and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services. The purpose of the grant program was to provide services to assist students with a high risk of truancy and academic failure to remain in or reenter school. This competitive grant program targeted rural districts which were underserved in the original **AI/DP**.

In 1987-87, two additional legislative initiatives were passed. In 1986, the **Educationally Related Support Services Act** was enacted to provide short-term counseling services by school social workers, counselors, or psychologists to non-handicapped students who display behavioral and adjustment problems. The program was funded in 1986 at $8.48 million and increased to $14.2 million in 1987. Funds were to be divided between all school districts.

In 1987, the **Youth At-Risk and Community Partnership Program** was enacted, with funds appropriated to develop model programs and encourage a link between schools and the community service providers. Services are provided for at-risk youth including drug and alcohol abusers and pregnant teenagers. The program emphasis is on intervention and prevention activities. Funding in 1987-88 of $7 million was increased to $14 million in 1988-89.

North Carolina. In 1985, the North Carolina General Assembly established the state dropout prevention fund as part of its basic educational program, the state's general aid formula. The State Board of Education subsequently developed a set of policies and procedures that specified the types of programs and activities for which these programs could be used. These included: in-school suspensions, counseling for high-risk students, extended school day programs, job placement specialists, school-to-work transition programs, and other special programs for high-risk students such as alternative schools and schools-within-schools.

Legislative appropriations for the initial year of implementation were $15 million. For the first five months of the 1987-88 school year the state allocated approximately $22.5 million to 136 school systems. As in previous years, more than half of the funds were used for in-school suspension programs and a fourth of the funds were used for high-risk counseling. An additional $34.7 million from other funding sources brought funding for dropout programs to $57.5 million. In 1988-89, $27 million was allocated in the state's dropout prevention budget, with an expectation that $2 million more would be allocated for 1989-90.

Oregon. The state implemented a statewide **Student Accounting System** in 1988-89 to learn more about students who leave school before completing a normal course of study. For its first year of implementation, all public secondary schools must file a report on early leavers. In subsequent years, the system will be expanded to junior high, middle, and elementary schools.

The **Student Accounting System** includes descriptive information and judgmental assessments of factors playing a role in the decision to leave. Frequently occurring patterns of these factors will be identified to enable the Oregon Department of Education and other agencies to develop programs in response to these factors.

School districts are responsible for identifying and counseling students with erratic attendance patterns, severe disciplinary problems, or those intending to withdraw from the regular education program, and advising and assisting them in securing alternative education (public or private) and/or counseling. Emphasis is on coordinated efforts between school districts and other youth serving agencies to develop a comprehensive delivery system.

Washington. The state of Washington established three programs in dropout prevention and retrieval. In 1977, the state established the **Educational Clinics Program** which operates under contract with the Office of Public Instruction. The program provides short-term educational intervention services to youths age 13-19 who have dropped out of the public school system for at least one month or have been expelled from school. The goals of the clinics are to enable the dropouts to reenter school, pass the GED test, or gain employment.

Funding for the 1987-88 and 1988-89 school years was $3.4 million. The **Clinics** are funded for 75 days of instruction through reimbursements by the state for an initial diagnostic test for each entering student and for an additional 60 days of instruction based on documentation of special needs. The key components of the **Educational Clinics** are:

- Diagnosis of each student's educational abilities; and
- An individualized, short-term, specialized program based on the diagnosis that aims to improve basic skills, improve motivation, and provide an employment orientation through instruction and experience in applying for and interviewing for jobs.

In 1987, the legislature appropriated $5.5 million for the 1987-88 and 1988-89 school years to develop programs to retain students at risk of dropping out or to retrieve students who had already dropped out of school. In addition, the legislature adopted criteria for identifying students at risk. Districts eligible for funds were those with a dropout rate in the top 25 percent of all districts' dropout rates. Fifty-three out of 60 school districts submitted a biennial application for funds.

School districts were required to use 20 percent of the money in grades K-8 for identification and early prevention efforts. Programs included evening school and the use of an environmentally challenging rural site for inner-city students, counseling programs for at-risk students, interagency cooperation and coordination programs coordinated through the University of Washington Institute for At-Risk Students, attendance intervention programs, and summer school programs. In 1987-88, 8,215 students in grades K-8 were served with $398,314, and 3,508 students in grades 9-12 were served with $698,699 in intensive, individually focused programs. Thirty-seven percent of the funds were used for K-8 prevention efforts. The numbers served and amounts expended will increase in 1988-89, as districts fully implement their programs and the remaining eligible districts apply for student retention and retrieval funds.

The legislature enacted a $2.5 million grant program in 1987 entitled **Schools for the 21st Century** to encourage individual schools and districts to experiment with reforms of their own design to improve student learning. To date, 21 projects are in operation -- nine elementary schools, one middle school, five high schools, four school districts, and two alternative programs. The participants have six years to conduct their experiments and evaluate their projects which must include some measure of student performance. Participants may request waivers from state and Federal regulations that hinder their efforts, such as those stipulating the length of the school day.

Summary

The issue of dropout prevention and recovery has captured the attention of policymakers at the national and state levels. Federal agencies are increasingly turning their attention to providing dropouts and dropout-prone youth with a range of services that address their varied needs. Employment training, basic skills and literacy training, and social services are among the services provided.

States have adopted varying strategies to respond to the problem, ranging from support for add-on programs tailored to specific locales to promoting systematic change in the way services are provided to students. Given the magnitude of the problem, it can be anticipated that states which have been relatively inactive on the issue are likely to face increasing pressure to take action to address the problem in the near future.

CHAPTER VIII

FOUNDATIONS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES TO THE DROPOUT PROBLEM

Several private, community, and corporate foundations, as well as organizations representing various constituencies, have targeted program funds to initiatives related to dropouts and at-risk youth. Local school districts have received funds to develop a range of programs to address the needs of at-risk youth. As is true of state programs, these programs include both program reform and schoolwide reform initiatives.

The Carnegie Corporation of New York

The Carnegie Corporation of New York supports a variety of programs related to school reform and programs to reduce school dropout rates. For the fourth year, the Corporation has funded the Coalition of Essential Schools, a network of secondary schools committed to the adoption of a more personalized system of education, with reduced teacher-to-pupil ratios, a flexible school structure, and greater attention to individual students' needs. The Coalition, based in the education department at Brown University, includes 49 schools, each of which has developed reforms appropriate to its own circumstances.

In 1988, the Corporation provided a two-year grant to the Public Education Association, a New York citizens' group, to collaborate with Bank Street College of Education in monitoring and evaluating three existing efforts at reform in New York City's public high schools: the reorganization of all ninth-grade classes into subsections based on different academic themes; a comprehensive school improvement program for schools that fail to meet the state's minimum standards; and an intensive dropout prevention program. The project staff is assessing the potential of these structural reforms for improving the education of low-income students.

In 1987, the Corporation provided a two-year grant to a research team at New York University to document the activities of a Ford Foundation project designed to bring technical assistance agencies together with schools and community-based organizations in 21 cities to develop and implement plans to reduce their dropout rates. Funds will be used to describe at least five of the collaboratives in depth and the remaining collaboratives more generally.

The Massachusetts Advocacy Center received a 30-month grant to help monitor the implementation of a sta2tewide incentive grant program enacted by the Massachusetts legislature. The program provides funds for remediation projects in grades one through nine and dropout prevention projects for grades seven through twelve. The Center's focus is on remediation and dropout prevention efforts in grades six through nine.

After evaluating the basic characteristics of the grant program, The Center will conduct a field analysis of four cities that have received incentive grants for programs for the middle grades. The Center's assessment will be used to improve administration of the grant program and the individual districts' use of funds, as needed. A report describing all aspects of the program will be available to educators and policymakers nationwide.

The Corporation has also provided support to the Education Commission of the States (ECS) for a range of activities. In 1987, ECS conducted a survey of state initiatives for at-risk youth to identify programs and/or planning efforts in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the three ECS member territories that address the needs of at-risk youth from preschool through high school. The focus of the survey was primarily state programs, especially those funded by state monies.

Among the initiatives were state responses to dropout prevention. The survey identified 190 programs directly related to dropout prevention. Forty-six states address the issue using a combination of research and practical experience to design their programs. Ten strategies appear most frequently: definition and identification, networks, academic support, special curricula, incentives and rewards, counseling, school policy changes, alternative schools, restructuring, and comprehensive state plans.

ECS also made 13 mini-grants to 12 states and the District of Columbia to encourage discussion, consensus-building, and policy formation on issues related to at-risk youth. Washington, D.C., Delaware, Florida, Maryland, Michigan, North Dakota, Nebraska, and Utah each received $1,000 grants to convene statewide forums or other collaborative efforts to develop comprehensive plans for providing services to at-risk students.

Iowa, New Mexico, Ohio, and Oklahoma each received $3,000 to $5,000 grants to support a variety of activities including: task forces to identify policies and practices that may contribute to a high dropout rate; regional conferences to spotlight model projects for resolving at-risk issues; and the creation of a citizens' commission to provide recommendations to the governor to address the problems of at-risk youth.

Annie E. Casey Foundation

As previously cited in Chapter II, the Annie E. Casey Foundation launched an initiative to assist five cities in developing programs and initiatives that will foster institutional change in the existing youth services system -- school, health, recreation, youth services, income maintenance, child welfare, job placement, and employment training. These systems are currently organized, financed, and delivered without overall coherence, thereby limiting their effectiveness. The central premise of the Foundation program, **New Futures**, is that the pattern of personal and social outcomes for at-risk children can be changed by altering the institutional environment that shapes their values, skills, opportunities, and aspirations.

The five sites selected in April 1988 to participate in the program are Dayton, Ohio; Lawrence, Massachusetts; Little Rock, Arkansas; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Savannah, Georgia. Each city will receive between five and 12 million dollars over the next five years. Cities are required to match, dollar-for-dollar, the Foundation's resources. All cities plan to add more than the required match.

Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

In 1986, with a planning grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation of $250,000 over 15 months, the **Commonwealth Futures Initiative** was established by the Massachusetts Governor's Office of Educational Affairs. The goal is to develop an integrated statewide strategy to help communities with the highest proportion of at-risk youth deal more effectively with dropout prevention and reentry.

At the local level, the goal is to help local teams of education, government, human service, and business leaders develop community-wide plans to lower school dropout rates and assist youth with the transition to work and/or higher education. The objective is to foster institutional change and move from fragmented to coordinated youth service systems. Teams are also working to change school policies which may unwittingly "push out" vulnerable youth.

As of 1989, six cities completed the first year of implementation and seven cities completed a six-month planning phase. Among the activities included in the plans are: developing a city-wide management information system to track individual service plans and youth progress; creating a multi-grade level; coordinating case management/service referral systems and parent support groups; and expanding community-based agency alternative programs which receive public school credit.

In June 1988, the Clark Foundation launched a new **Program for Disadvantaged Youth**, focusing on disadvantaged youth in inner city school districts, in grades six through nine. Participants must score below the 40th percentile on a nationally normed, standardized reading test and/or must be eligible to receive a free or reduced price lunch under the Federal school lunch program.

Through a systemic approach to middle grades reform, the Foundation hopes to provide young adolescents with an education of high expectations, high content, and high support. Five urban school systems -- Baltimore, Louisville, Milwaukee, Oakland, and San Diego -- were chosen from a grants competition to participate in the program. In 1989, the Foundation provided an initial two-year grant of $400,000 to each district, with subsequent grants for three additional years, assuming satisfactory progress toward reform. While no prescribed curricular or organizational changes are required, four objectives were identified for disadvantaged youth. They will:

- Remain in school and complete the middle grades curriculum on time;
- Exhibit mastery of higher-order reasoning, thinking, and comprehension skills;
- Exhibit greater self-esteem and self-efficacy and better attitudes toward school and school work, as a result of regularly engaging in supportive interactions with adults; and
- Enter high school with an understanding of how different curricula can affect their career and/or postsecondary education options, and select programs of study that enable them to pursue their choices.

In addition to the five sites receiving long-term and intensive support, the Foundation, through a grant to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, has created a network of up to 20 other urban school systems committed to developing more challenging education for disadvantaged youth in the middle grades. The network, through a series of national meetings, will enable the **Program** to develop and sustain relationships with other cities that are striving to implement their objectives.

Additional grants were provided to a range of organizations, including community groups, the National Committee for Citizens in Education, and research institutions to provide support for the participating school districts, to evaluate the **Program**, and to help disseminate information about the **Program** nationwide.

The Clark Foundation has also funded a project directed by the National Association of State Boards of Education to restructure Seattle's 10 middle schools. This project was discussed in Chapter 2.

Ford Foundation

In 1986, the Ford Foundation initiated the **Urban School Dropout Prevention Collaboratives Program** to make dropout prevention a central focus and higher priority in cities around the country. Through a competitive grants program, school districts in 21 cities each received grants of $25,000 to develop collaborative dropout prevention initiatives which involve the school system and major community groups. The collaboratives are arrangements between city school systems (or a subset of schools), community-based businesses, and public and private institutions and agencies. The collaboratives, with technical assistance from intermediary agencies, assembled data on dropout rates in their cities, examined local causes of student dropout, identified existing school and community services that could help prevent students from dropping out, and devised programs to address the needs of dropouts.

The Foundation funded the second phase of the program in 1988 with grants totaling $2.3 million. Dropout prevention programs will include training parents to help at-risk students, strengthening the links between schools and community health counseling services, expanding the use of volunteer tutors, and establishing early childhood education programs. Grants were also awarded to three intermediate agencies -- the Academy for Educational Development in New York, the Intercultural Development Research Association in San Antonio, and the Southern Regional Council in Atlanta -- to provide the collaboratives with technical assistance and to organize periodic workshops for leaders of the groups.

Additional grants were awarded to: the National Committee for Citizens in Education to update its Book of Sources, a catalog of research, cost analyses, and descriptive information on various dropout prevention projects; and the Institutional Development and Economic Affairs Services to develop further an interview process for students who are dropping out of school.

William T. Grant Foundation

The William T. Grant Foundation supports research on the psychological and behavioral problems of school-aged children. Programs addressing the dropout problem include investigating the factors contributing to the high dropout rates in inner-city schools, developing innovative strategies to enhance academic skills (Private Industry Council of New York City, Public/Private Ventures), training out-of-school youth in skills that are good predictors of employability (United Methodist Church), and identifying effective programs for at-risk students and identifying the barriers to educational services for these students (Council of Chief State School Officers).

Lilly Endowment, Inc.

The Lilly Endowment has organized a five-year (1987-1992) grants initiative focused on school improvement, primarily in Indiana's largest urban areas. The multi-year effort focuses on six primary areas including:

- Middle-grades school improvement. Ten planning grants were awarded to cities with the highest concentration of students and minority enrollments. Three-year implementation grants were awarded to the cities that met the project's criteria. The major areas of concentration were reading, dropout prevention, and redesigning the structure and organization of middle schools. Teachers were given a prominent role in the planning and implementation process. Schools were encouraged to emphasize parent participation, youth involvement, and collaboration with youth-serving agencies.

- Dropout prevention and increased access to postsecondary education. Emphasis is on comprehensive school/community ventures built on a solid data base and on the ability of local authorities to track students over a long period of time. To make postsecondary education available, the Foundation instituted a $50 million scholarship fund.

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

Under their at-risk youth initiative, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation funds various programs focusing on youth employment and training. Among the projects funded are the following:

- The **Comprehensive Competencies Program**, developed by the Remediation and Training Institute in Washington, D.C., uses computers to determine a student's level of competency in various subjects and to provide instruction in areas where students are weak.

- The **Hispanic Policy Development Project** provides funding for research to improve job opportunities for Hispanic dropouts with limited labor market skills. The project includes an analysis of program options and strategies effective in recruiting, training, and placing Hispanic dropouts, and

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field-work in five major cities with large concentrations of Hispanic populations.

- **Jobs for America's Graduates** is a school-to-work transition program designed for high school juniors and seniors who have been identified as potentially unemployable. Current funding supports the implementation and evaluation of a dropout prevention strategy for students grades 10 to 12. The objective is to build self-esteem and personal motivation, relate part-time and summer employment to remaining in school, and provide basic skills remediation.

- The **Metropolitan Detroit Youth Foundation - Twelve Together Program** uses peer support and counseling to help ninth graders in the public school system improve their academic performance and increase their likelihood of graduation. Evaluation data show the program is effective in reducing the school dropout rate and absenteeism and in improving academic performance. The program is also funded by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Skillman Foundation.

The Mott foundation also funds activities to assess and promote activities at the state level. MDC, Inc. received two grants to conduct a 50-state survey of policies and practices addressing at-risk youth and to complete case studies and conduct regional conferences to raise the level of national consciousness concerning at-risk youth. The Council of Chief State School Officers also received a grant to strengthen the effectiveness of state superintendents of education in meeting the educational needs of at-risk youth. The grant was used to identify barriers in the current education system to effectively serve at-risk youth; adopt a functional definition of at-risk students; identify successful programs serving at-risk students; and make recommendations for structural change.

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, part of the National Education Association (NEA), provides grants for teachers' initiatives with students at risk of dropping out of school. Grants are available only to NEA members. Since 1986, when the program was first initiated, the foundation has awarded $867,587.

Prudential Foundation

The Prudential Foundation has provided funding to the National Committee for Citizens in Education for a three-and-one-half-year project designed to increase the influence of parents in dropout prevention at **Harlem Park Middle School** in Baltimore, Maryland. The specific goals of the $475,000 project are to improve competency and confidence of parents to influence school success, to make parents an added force in dropout prevention, and to reduce the loss of children between middle school and high school by 25 percent.

Appalachian Regional Commission

Since 1984, the Appalachian Regional Commission has taken an active role in addressing problems of school dropouts in Appalachia. An initial allocation of $1 million in 1985 has been increased to over $5 million to support dropout programs operated by educational institutions and community groups. Fifty percent of these funds have been committed to the initiative by individual governors of 11 Appalachian states. While funded programs take a variety of approaches, each was designed and planned after looking at the individual needs of the children to be placed in the program; each program also reflects its community and its available resources.

Some program activities include building self-esteem at the middle grade level, a take-home computer and homework program to involve parents in their child's education, a video presentation for local businesses showing how dropouts affect their community, a special support program for entering ninth graders blocking them in a two-hour period for extra help, reinforcement and support and peer tutoring by high school students, and home tutoring for at-risk students, which includes parent participation.

Summary

The issue of youth at risk of dropping out is a concern for both public and private institutions. Several foundations and organizations representing various constituencies have made dropout prevention a major priority. As the research has made clear, the dropout problem is a multidimensional one and requires a variety of solutions from policymakers in the private sector. Grants support research institutions and local school districts. Programs funded range from fostering systemic change in the nation's schools to developing collaborative dropout prevention initiatives. Several of the initiatives focus on the middle grades, where developmental changes tend to compound the problems of potential school dropouts.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Dropping out of school has significant negative consequences for both the individual and society. Moreover, it is clear from the research that the dropout problem is a multidimensional one and requires a variety of solutions from policymakers in both the public and private sectors.

The Magnitude of the Problem

This study looked at three ways of defining the dropout rate.

- The incidence of school dropouts is the number of dropouts or a dropout rate that is measured over a period of time such as a school year or calendar year. Between October 1989 and October 1990, 405,000 youths between the ages of 16 and 24 dropped out of school. The dropout rate was approximately 3.9 percent for the 1989-90 school year. The dropout rate among the handicapped population for school year 1987-88 was 27.4 percent. This type of dropout rate has been described as an event rate.

- The cohort rate is the proportion of students in an entering high school class who did not graduate with their class. The cohort rate was 15.9 percent for 14-to-19-year-olds who were in school in October 1986.

- The prevalence of school dropouts is the proportion of individuals at any point in time who are not enrolled in school and who have not completed a high school education. The prevalence of school dropouts in 1989 for young adults age 16 to 24 was 4.04 million. This type of rate has been described as a status rate.

The 1970s and 1980s, with the exception of the handicapped population, marked a consistent decline in both the event rate and status rate of school dropouts. Although dropout rates for minorities have generally been higher than dropout rates for whites, there has been some narrowing of the gap in dropout rates between whites and blacks. The dropout rate for Hispanics, however, is considerably higher than rates for either whites or blacks.

Dropout rates vary by region and geographical jurisdiction. They are highest in the South and lowest in the Northeast. Rates are highest in central cities and lowest in suburban areas. Dropout rates of handicapped students in small towns and rural schools are similar to the rates in large cities.

Although a sizable proportion of American youths never finish high school, many students who drop out eventually return to the educational system to complete their diploma requirements. A number of characteristics are associated with dropouts most likely to return to school.

- Students who had completed more of their education before dropping out are more likely to return to school and complete their education.
- Rates of return and completion are higher for males than females.
- Blacks and whites have similar rates of return and completion.
- Hispanics have significantly lower rates of return and completion than either blacks or whites.

A large proportion of dropouts who eventually complete their high school education tend to complete an alternative program such as a General Equivalency Diploma rather than return to a regular high school program.

The Consequences of Dropping Out

Dropping out of high school has adverse effects on the labor market opportunities of both young adults and older members of the work force. For individuals, the consequences are evident in:

- Lower rates of employment;
- Employment in lower skilled jobs; and
- Lower earnings.

High school completion has a differential effect on the labor market opportunities of racial and ethnic groups.

- High school completion narrows the gap in employment rates between blacks and whites, but it does not narrow the gap between Hispanics and whites.
- High school completion is associated with a decline in the percent of the population employed in service and operators positions in all age, racial, and ethnic groups, but the decline is greatest for Hispanics and smallest for blacks.

- High school completion increases the percentage of people employed in technical and precision production positions more for Hispanics than for blacks and whites.

- High school completion does not narrow the earnings gap between minorities and whites for all age groups.

In addition to the economic consequences, there are political and social costs of dropping out. Society may suffer because unemployment and lost earnings lower tax revenues and increase the demand for social services.

Programs for Dropout-Prone Youth or Dropouts

Although the purposes and goals of specific dropout programs vary, their objectives tend to cluster around four broad areas:

- Improve students' academic performance;

- Improve students' attendance;

- Improve students' personal and social skills; and

- Prepare students for careers.

These objectives tend to be overlapping, as efforts are underway in many schools to meet the needs of the whole child. Academic remediation is often accompanied by increased counseling and social services and by linking school attendance and completion to employment and career opportunities.

Although schools have traditionally been the providers of dropout prevention services, other providers, including other departments of government, social service agencies, job training institutions, and private businesses, have entered the dropout prevention field. In some cases, these new providers work as adjuncts to the schools to support them in their efforts to meet their students' needs; in other cases, they are working independently of the schools or as alternatives to the schools.

Characteristics of Effective Programs

Although researchers may disagree about the elements of effective dropout prevention programs -- and very little evidence exists from rigorous evaluation studies -- several characteristics emerge consistently in the dropout prevention literature. These characteristics were validated during our visits to the dropout programs in the original Pelavin Associates' study. In addition, the site visits produced a set of observations that were reviewed in conjunction with the literature findings. Overall, the following characteristics of dropout programs emerged as contributing to program effectiveness, based on both the literature review and site visits to selected programs:

- Small class size, low pupil-teacher ratios, program autonomy, and a supportive school environment;
- Motivated, committed teachers and teacher autonomy;
- A team management approach to planning, implementing, and evaluating dropout prevention strategies;
- The principal is an entrepreneur willing to experiment with new approaches;
- Individual attention to students by the teachers;
- Clear communication of program goals and students' responsibilities;
- Reinforcement of student progress by the school;
- Learning programs focused on basic skills and based on a diagnosis of students' academic needs;
- Individual or group counseling and mentor programs;
- Recognition that individual students have multiple needs and that different students need different combinations of services;
- Cooperation between schools to ease the transition from elementary to middle/junior high school and then again to high school;
- Parental involvement in the student's educational program; and
- Cooperation between schools and businesses in programs to provide career awareness and job training.

Schoolwide Reforms

Because there is concern that program reform does not get to the root of the dropout problem, schoolwide reform has been advocated as a comprehensive approach to dropout prevention. Although there is no one model, the literature on schoolwide reform and current efforts point to some promising ways to deal with youths at risk for dropping out of school:

- Educators are given increased autonomy at the school building level;
- School programs are structured and scheduled more flexibly;
- Innovative instructional strategies designed to accommodate the strengths and weakness of a diverse student population are introduced;
- The overall atmosphere in schools is personalized and nurturing;
- All parts of the community are encouraged to be actively involved in school activities;
- Case management is used to help at-risk youth identify, gain timely access to, and successfully complete an individualized set of services provided by a variety of institutions; and
- Teachers receive special training in new methods of teaching and ways of responding to the unique developmental needs of adolescents.

Public and Private Responses to the Dropout Problem

As concern over the magnitude of the dropout problem has spread, Federal and state policymakers, private groups, communities, foundations, and others have initiated various programs to meet the needs of at-risk or disadvantaged youths.

Federal Responses

Various Federal agencies have developed programs or set aside funds within existing programs to address the needs of at-risk and disadvantaged youths. The Department of Education has supported demonstration projects to address the dropout problem as well as efforts to obtain comprehensive information on the size and nature of the dropout population. The National Center for Education Statistics, for example, is providing support to the Council of Chief State School Officers to improve the comparability, comprehensiveness, and timeliness of data reported annually by states and public schools. A common definition of dropouts and a set of guidelines and procedures were developed for collecting dropout statistics and computing dropout rates.

The Office of Special Education Programs has engaged in various activities to address the problem of dropping out among handicapped youth including collecting state-level exiting data, sponsoring research on the magnitude and effects of dropping out of school, and tracking activities nationwide to address the problem. The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Office of Vocational and Adult education are each supporting demonstration programs targeting at-risk youth.

The Department of Labor administers the Job Training Partnership Act, including Title IIA, Training Services for Disadvantaged Youth, which requires that 40 percent of the funds allocated to local areas be spent on disadvantaged youths between the ages of 16 and 21. In addition, the Department of Labor supports pilot programs such as the **Summer Training and Education Program** specifically designed for disadvantaged youths.

Agencies are cooperating to provide services for dropout-prone youths or school dropouts. The **Cities in Schools** program, for example, is a cooperative effort by the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Justice to seek community ownership in developing solutions to the problems of dropout-prone youth. The Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services jointly support programs for in-school youth, recent school dropouts, and out-of-school youth as part of their **Youth 2000** campaign.

State Responses

State dropout prevention runs the gamut from relatively inactive to fairly intense. Three basic program and funding strategies operate in the states to meet the needs of dropout-prone youth and school dropouts:

- Demonstration or model program grants;
- Research and dissemination grants; and
- Planning and implementation grants.

States use three basic mechanisms to fund dropout prevention programs:

- Categorical grants;
- General formula funding; and
- Cost-reimbursement.

States have adopted varying strategies to respond to the dropout problem, from supporting special programs tailored to specific locales to promoting systemic change in the way services are provided to students. Although services vary among the states, the following observations can be made.

- Academic improvement programs encompass a variety of interventions including alternative schools or classes, alternative curricula and instructional techniques, and extracurricular activities.
- Attendance improvement programs emphasize improving contact with parents, providing rewards for attendance, and improving recordkeeping.
- Personal adjustment programs emphasize individual or group counseling, family counseling, mentors, case management, and cooperation with social service agencies to provide services to students.
- Career preparation and job training programs offer career counseling and seminars on employability, internships with community service agencies or private employers, modified scheduling to permit after-school employment, and, in some cases, guaranteed employment upon completion of the program, or high school diploma or its equivalent.
- Early intervention programs work with children who have been identified early as being at risk. In some states, interventions are instituted at the pre school level.
- The states are working to improve their collection of data on school dropouts and to develop a uniform methodology for reporting actual dropout information.
- States are beginning to experiment with schoolwide reform to meet the needs of all students.

Private Responses

As is true of state programs, foundation and other initiatives to meet the needs of dropout-prone youth include both program reform and schoolwide reform initiatives. A review of the various initiatives supported by several foundations leads to the following general observations:

- Interventions are being targeted to the middle grades, where developmental changes tend to compound the problems of potential school dropouts.
- Urban school districts are being reformed to provide a more coherent educational and human service delivery system to all youth.
- Cooperative arrangements between the city school systems and community-based businesses, and public and private institutions and agencies have become an important conduit for providing services to potential school dropouts.

- Gaining the active cooperation of parents in dropout prevention is regarded as a key element to the success of any program.

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